



The California Family to Family Initiative Highlights of County Activities (Jan – Dec 2006)

LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM:

- Bill Bettencourt, Senior Consultant, Operations Manager for the F2F Pacific Region
- Jana Rickerson, Manager, Training, Technical Assistance, and TDM California Lead Consultant
- Barbara Needell, Lead Self-Evaluation TA Consultant/UC Berkeley
- Crystal Luffberry, Project Manager, California Connected by 25 Initiative
- Bob Friend, California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP)
- Kate Welty and Dana Wellhausen, California Child and Family Policy Institute (CFPI)
- Yali Lincroft and Jena Resner, Administrative and Immigration Consultants
- Debbie Yip and Monica Caprio, The Resource Center for Family Focused Practice/UC Davis

CALIFORNIA-BASED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (TA) TEAM:

- Recruitment, Development, and Support of Resource Families (RDS): Karri Biehle, Lucretia Haymer, and Pat Reynolds Harris
- Building Community Partnerships (BCP): Cynthia Billups, Randi Gotlieb, and Rene Velazquez
- Team Decisionmaking (TDM): Jana Rickerson (lead TA), Karri Biehle, Carol Greenwald, and Stefanie Nieto Johnson
- Self-Evaluation (SE): Barbara Needell (lead TA), Daniel Webster, Bill Dawson, Anne Abramson, and Tara Lain
- Reducing Disproportionality and Disparity (RDD): Bill Bettencourt, Kate Welty, Jana Rickerson, and Cynthia Billups
- Parent Engagement: Cynthia Billups, Greg Colver, and La Tonya Conway-Hampton
- Immigration and Child Welfare: Yali Lincroft, Rene Velazquez, and Ken Borelli

NATIONAL ANNIE E CASEY FOUNDATION TA CONSULTANTS WORKING IN CALIFORNIA:

- BCP: Terri Ali and Sheila Spydell
- RDS: Diane DeLeonardo, Denise Goodman, and Michael Sanders
- TDM: Jana Rickerson (lead), Pat Rideout, and Stacey Saunders
- SE: Barbara Needell (lead) and Daniel Webster
- Parent Engagement: Sandra Jimenez and Randy Jenkins
- Youth Engagement: Michael Sanders
- Disproportionality and Disparity: Marsha Wickliffe

CALIFORNIA F2F KEY FUNDING PARTNERS:

- Teri Kook and Amy Freeman, Stuart Foundation
- Wanda Mial, Gretchen Test, and Dionisa Santiago, Annie E Casey Foundation
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- Mary Ault, Sonja St. Mary, Jack Stroppini, Cheri Shaw, and Dayna Haldeman, CA Dept of Social Services

Since starting TDMs, social workers have come to more fully embrace family participation in child welfare decisions, and families who have experienced TDM report feeling involved, listened to and validated. After participating in a TDM, a caseworker declared, “This is why I’m a social worker.”
- Quote from Family to Family Coordinator submitted with annual report (2007)

INTRODUCTION

This report provides a highlight of the activities of the California Family to Family (F2F) counties from January - December 2006. F2F is a national child welfare and foster care reform initiative developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in 1992. Partners in the California F2F Initiative include the Annie E Casey Foundation, the Stuart Foundation, the Walter S Johnson Foundation, and the California Department of Social Services. Currently, 25 out of 58 California counties participate in the F2F Initiative.

Approximately 88% of the 78,278 children in California child welfare supervised foster care are living in a F2F county (Data from Center for Social Services at UC Berkeley, Dec, 2006).

CONVENINGS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

During this report period, F2F counties in California were divided into four cluster groups. The clusters were organized by their approximate F2F implementation dates.¹ Los Angeles has its own cluster grouping and is divided into three geographic areas. Thirteen (13) cluster convenings were held and two statewide conferences held in 2006. The Center for Family Focused Practice at UC Davis coordinates all the convenings. F2F Coordinator meetings were held quarterly in 2006 as a forum of peer-to-peer information sharing and support. A listserv with relevant child welfare articles and resources is provided for all California F2F sites. A Family to Family website, www.f2f.ca.gov is hosted by The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and maintained jointly by F2F and CDSS staff.

The four core strategies of F2F are:

1. Recruitment, Development, and Support of Resource Families (RDS)
2. Building Community Partnerships (BCP)
3. Team Decisionmaking (TDM)
4. Self Evaluation (SE)

California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I) is an additional California F2F strategy focused on positive youth development and successful transition of foster youth age 14-24.

The outcome goals of Family to Family:

- A reduction in the number of children served in institutional and congregate care.
- A shift of resources from congregate and institutional cares to family foster care and family-centered services across all child and family-serving systems.
- A decrease in the lengths of stay in out-of-home placement.
- An increase in the number of planned reunifications.
- A decrease in the number of re-entries into care.
- A reduction in the number of placement moves experienced by children in care.
- An increase in the number of siblings placed together.
- A reduction in the total number of children served away from their own families.
- A reduction in any disparities associated with race/ethnicity, gender, or age in each of these outcomes.

¹ In 2007, the cluster division by implementation dates was reorganized into four clusters grouped by geographic proximity.

PACIFIC REGION AND REORGANIZATION

In Fall 2006, there was a reorganization of the national F2F model by Annie E Casey Foundation, to accommodate the growth of the initiative. This new structure went into effect January 2007. California is now part of the Pacific Region, which includes three states (Alaska, California, and Washington). There will be a three-year F2F evaluation beginning in 2007. There are fourteen (14) sites across the country that will participate in the national evaluation. The fourteen (14) sites selected by AECF are called anchor sites.² Five (5) of the fifteen AECF selected anchor sites are located in California³. Four additional sites were selected to be California anchors, with the support of the Stuart Foundation⁴ to make a total of 18 F2F anchor sites. While these four Stuart anchor counties will not participate in the formal national evaluation, the Center for Social Services Research at UC Berkeley will be tracking their outcomes, along with the five national AECF anchor counties. All 25 F2F counties will continue to receive technical assistance as previously under the new reorganization due to the unique California public/private partnership that utilizes support from local and national foundations, and the California Dept of Social Services. The strategic use of blended funds enables California to provide support to counties, but also begin the planning needed to sustain and institutionalize these F2F reform efforts.

RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT (RDS)

Most of the counties, often working with their local foster parent association, offer support groups, hotlines, and mentorship programs for resource families. Many of the sites are working with their local faith-based organizations for their assistance in recruiting and supporting foster families. Twenty-four out of 25 F2F counties reported having or planning Icebreaker⁵ meetings between birth parents and foster parents. Over 40% of the F2F counties reported offering respite child care services which include: 24 or 72-hour respite care for emergency foster parents and foster parents who were certified to care for drug/alcohol exposed infants and medically fragile infants; for attending classes, court, or family or sibling meetings. In some counties, the relative substitute care provider qualified for Kinship Support Respite Services. Funding for the respite care came from a variety of sources, including Wraparound Fund, Title IVE, and SCIAP funds (Specialized Care Incentives and Assistance Program). Many counties reported increases in new foster homes, adoptions, relative placement, and placement with siblings. Many counties also reported reductions in the number of youth in long-term foster care and group home placement.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS (BCP)

In their annual report, F2F sites reported their BCP Strategy developed or strengthened relationships with government partners (i.e. police, health, mental health, and probation) and community-based agencies, including faith-based and service-based organizations (i.e. immigration, food, clothing job training, addiction and teen programs). Many sites had geographically assigned staff that attended collaborative meetings, individually sponsored community, and networking events.

² The 14 national AECF F2F anchor sites in addition to the 9 CA sites include Colorado/Denver; Arizona/Maricopa County/ Phoenix ; Michigan/Wayne County/Detroit, Michigan Macomb County; New York/NYC; Ohio/Cleveland; Kentucky/Jefferson County/Louisville; North Carolina/Guilford County/Greensboro; North Carolina/Wake County/Raleigh

³ The five national AECF anchor counties in CA are Alameda, Fresno, Los Angeles, Orange, and San Francisco

⁴ The four Stuart anchor counties in CA are Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Luis Obispo, and Riverside counties.

⁵ The term “Ice Breakers” refers to an initial meeting between birth parents, foster parents, and the caseworker. This meeting provides an opportunity for birth and foster parents to discuss the needs of the child before placement.

Some examples of BCP successes included:

- Utilizing State Redesign funds to fund community-based case management positions.
- Assigning CASA volunteers to 75% of the clients participating in TDMs.
- Developing a contract with an immigrant serving organization that has increased capacity to respond to families who speak indigenous dialects.
- Creating a team of neighborhood-based “Cultural Brokers.” Cultural brokers are community partners that received extensive training on F2F and the child welfare system have been a community representative for a minimum of six months. Cultural Brokers share not only their knowledge and information about ethnic groups but also on specialized topics such as substance abuse, domestic violence, and immigration. They are participants at TDMs and at F2F strategy meetings.
- Holding a convening with Asian and Pacific Islander (API) service providers and community members to discuss strategies for serving API families.
- Implementing an evidenced based parenting program by partnering with a community collaborative. The program includes a visitation/meal time between parents and their children prior to their class. Caregivers receive respite while children are engaged in supervised productive time with their siblings and parents. Community collaborative members are responsible for providing the funding for the meal, and the clinically trained staff who teach the curriculum. Staff provided transportation and supervision during the visitation portion. The program boasts a 95% attendance rate.

IMPLEMENTING TEAM DECISIONMAKING (TDM)

As of December 2006, 24 out of 25 California F2F counties have rolled out TDMs. This effort was a collaborative effort with the national AECF TA consultants, California-based TDM TA consultants, the Center for Social Service Research/UC Berkeley, and The Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice at The Center for Human Services/UC Davis. A statewide TDM convening was held with all 25 California F2F counties in 2006. The convening included half-day skill enhancement training for TDM Facilitators and their supervisors. As part of the California System Improvement Plan (SIP), TDM has been adopted as the approach to implementation of the youth transitions/permanence component.

TDM DATABASE

All F2F sites are required to submit Quarterly TDM reports which included a number of TDMs, types of TDM, recommendations made and who attended TDM. The California TDM database team, which consists of F2F consultants and UC Berkeley staff, provides TDM database and technical support. This team monitors and reviews quarterly TDM reports, discusses database issues within counties and reviews database changes that would make the system more user-friendly.

As of June 2006, UC Berkeley reported the following data for the CA F2F TDM Data:

- 24 California counties reported holding TDMs.
- 26,338 total reported recommendations made in TDM meetings.
- The majority of TDM recommendations were conducted for imminent risk of placement, the next largest group was for emergency placement and placement move.

TEAM DECISIONMAKING FACILITATORS

In collaboration with UC Davis, there were six (6) Five-Day TDM Facilitator Trainings offered in 2006. There were 145 new TDM facilitators trained in 2006. There are approximately 280 trained Facilitators in California and about one third (90) are full time Facilitators. The trainer pool includes California-based TAs, AECF consultants, and trained California TDM facilitators.

Some examples of TDM successes by the F2F counties this year included:

- Implementing a second shift of Emergency Response (ER) workers that employs regular staff until 10:00 pm. This expanded ER staffing allows more children coming into care after 6 PM to have a TDM. In addition, a rapid police response has been developed which is improving social worker response to law enforcement investigation in the field. A special hotline for law enforcement agencies has been activated for this purpose.
- Making TDMs mandatory for every child at risk of removal. Many counties have adopted a general rule of “once a TDM, always a TDM” (i.e. once a family or child has had an initial TDM, then subsequent moves and exit decisions are made through TDM while they continue to roll out through full implementation).
- Holding TDMs at a Family Resource Center located within one of the targeted zip codes to make the meetings more accessible to families.

SELF EVALUATION (SE)

F2F sites reported that their Self-Evaluation Teams (SET) groups provided relevant evaluation reports to their internal and external partners, including visuals mapping of foster homes in specific neighborhoods, foster homes within school boundaries, and child abuse rates and child removals by neighborhoods. F2F Sites often utilize the UC Berkeley Child Welfare Research Center website <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/defaultStatic.asp>. UC Berkeley developed a new dynamic reporting interface in 2006, which allowed users to produce custom data tables. The new reports provide increased flexibility and greater capacity to respond to specific needs by permitting users to select sub-categories of variables of interest. Many of the sites merged the evaluation work required of AB636, Redesign, and F2F into one working group.

Some examples of SE successes by the F2F counties included:

- Developing a quarterly “Child Welfare Services & Linkages” report to provide data on the AB636 outcome domains of Safety, Permanence, and Family/Child Well-Being in a user-friendly format. The semi-annual “Snapshot of Children in Foster Care” report provides data on the children and youth currently in foster care, and helps to educate staff and community as related to the nine F2F outcomes.
- Producing a quarterly Data book which provided an overview of data from each of the programs, including the number of referrals each month, the number of families who reunified, the number of youth involved in ILP, etc.
- Completing a study called “Reasons for Recurrence of Maltreatment Referrals in Families with Young Infants” to help determine the factors that lead families to have two consecutive referrals in a relatively short time period. The study shows that risk factors included domestic violence and substance abuse.
- Creating a shared drive with all fact sheets and disproportionality reports for staff and partner to review. Every city in the county that implemented F2F TDMs had a fact sheet.

- Developing a survey to obtain information about foster youth after they leave the system. A random sample of emancipated youth in one F2F County found that 78% were still attending school six months after emancipation. One third had not graduated from high school prior to emancipation, but almost all of them were trying to get their GED or otherwise continue their education. According to the survey, 64% of the youth were working, but matching with state payroll tax data found that emancipated youth tended to work sporadically and that their average earnings were well below the federal poverty line. According to the survey, 8% of the youth were homeless.

CALIFORNIA CONNECTED BY 25 INITIATIVE (CC25I):⁶

CC25I is a California F2F initiative that is assisting public child welfare agencies and their communities to build comprehensive transition-aged foster youth supports and services. This initiative is part of the national Connected by 25 work of the Youth Transition Funders Group. There are five counties⁷ who are currently receiving grant funding from the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, the Stuart Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation. An outcomes framework aligns the CC25I focus areas with measurable outcomes, tools, and strategies have been developed to track transition-aged youth outcomes for self-evaluation and program improvement. Outreach, youth engagement, community partnership, on-site training and technical assistance, and twice-yearly convenings are important in creating the learning environment that supports implementation of CC25I. CC25I counties are assisting in the development and refining of CC25I values, tools, and practices essential for building a comprehensive continuum and improving outcomes for transitioning foster youth. Once this California strategy is fully developed, technical assistance and support will be available for implementation of this strategy by interested counties.

Some examples of CC25I successes to date include:

- Santa Clara's effective marketing of CC25I to change the landscape in their community - their strong weave of youth, community and agency staff working together has resulted in new innovative and responsive transitional housing, career pathway, higher education, and financial literacy/asset building strategies and supports.
- Fresno's strong permanency and K-12 work and partnerships which are bridging the gap between systems and raising the bar on advocacy and support - they have developed Resource Family Transitional Housing and have increased their presence in the community and their educational advocacy and support by placing Independent Living Program (ILP) workers within schools.
- San Francisco's strong partnerships with Workforce Development and the community – they are creating youth-friendly one-stops - are building partnerships with employers interested in hiring former foster youth such as Skywest, and have developed a non-profit Friends of San Francisco Independent Living Skill Program which is very successful at raising funds for housing needs of their youth attending college.
- Stanislaus's collaborative service-delivery models – with their mental health partners they have developed an integrated model of transitional housing, employment, and permanency services called MY HOME THP+. The county is partnering with their county's Cal Learn program to

⁶ For more information about CA Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I), <http://www.f2f.ca.gov/California25.htm>

⁷ The five CC25I California Counties are Alameda, Fresno, San Francisco, Santa Clara, and Stanislaus.

implement financial literacy training and matched savings accounts for former foster youth and Cal Learn youth.

- Alameda’s continuing youth engagement, transitional housing, and permanency efforts – they have developed a Youth Advisory Board that provides program recommendations, community presentations, and other outreach. The county is building several transitional housing and supportive service programs in their aftercare program Beyond Emancipation, and they continue their extensive permanency efforts with their Dumisha Jama program.

FOSTER YOUTH PERMANENCE, YOUTH TRANSITIONS AND YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

F2F counties are implementing policy and practice changes to increase permanence for older youth, including extensive relative searches and targeted recruitment for foster homes/adoption for older youth. All F2F counties are also involved in some components of youth engagement including development of youth speaker panels, participation in social worker/foster parent trainings, participation of youth in advisory committees and workgroups, discussions and partnerships with probation and education departments, and workforce development agencies. The Stuart Foundation continues its support for the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP)⁸, in partnership with the Zellerbach Family Fund and Walter S. Johnson Foundation. CPYP currently works with fourteen (14) F2F counties. Most of the counties are also involved or have a local chapter of California Youth Connection (CYC). In many counties, California Youth Connection (CYC) is an active participant on the Foster Parent Advisory Board. Almost all F2F counties utilize the PRIDE/F2F curriculum and both birth parents and former foster youth are involved in the training.

Some examples of F2F successes include:

- Developing Foster Youth Advisory Boards. One County utilized this board to review the gaps in foster youth education, housing, and employment services and recommended ways to bridge these gaps with services.
- Creating Youth Speakers Bureaus that compensated emancipated foster youth for their participation at forums such as the foster parent PRIDE training.
- Creating dedicated Independent Living Program (ILP) Permanency Case Managers or Permanency Specialist positions to help identify lifelong connections. In one F2F county, the ILP developed a youth advisory board named PAUSE (Paying Attention Using Self-Evaluation) in which a core group of six former foster youth facilitated a bi-monthly support group for current and foster youth focusing on transition issues. The PAUSE, CYC, and Youth Leaders actively engage foster youth as co-facilitators at all of the ILP classes and workshops.
- Developing the Young Adult Preparation Process (YAPP), which utilizes TDMs to provide a venue for infusing CPYP values, plan for transition, build life skills and address permanency.
- Working with the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) on the HOPE project. Of the 15 targeted youth, 11 of them made permanent connections, and CWS or the Probation Department continue to assist the other four youths obtain permanency. The HOPE program was one of five programs that received recognition from the State of California legislators in May 2006. HOPE also received national recognition at the 2006 National California Permanency for Youth Project conference.

⁸ For more information about the California Permanency for Youth Project, <http://www.cpy.org/updates.htm>.

- Partnering with City Colleges to implement the Ameri-Corp Mentoring Program that provided one-on-one mentoring and support and to have a positive role model and learn basic, every day life skills.
- Two F2F counties have developed Permanency Handbooks. One handbook titled, “There's No Place Like Home: A Guide to Youth Permanency” has been published and is widely distributed to youth, resource families, social workers and community partners.
- In one county the Youth Leaders initiated and developed a “Youth Permanency Talking Points” document. This tool can be used anytime a staff person from a child welfare service agency is having a training or discussion regarding youth and/or permanency.
- Establishing a Family Finding Pilot which has targeted 20 youth older than 13 the goal of finding a family connection.

IMMIGRATION AND CHILD WELFARE

In the spring 2006, the Annie E Casey Foundation released a policy report, “*Undercounted, Underserved: Immigrant and Refugee Families in the Child Welfare System*”⁹ The report was a summary of research and interviews with experts and frontline social workers on the current practice and policy for immigrant families within the child welfare system. There are three California-based F2F consultants available to provide TA to California counties on issues related to immigration and child welfare. Several counties have specialized immigration liaison positions or bilingual units. Several counties have developed Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with the Mexican Consulates including San Diego, Sacramento, Monterey, San Bernardino, and Santa Clara counties. The California-based immigration liaison consultant for F2F is a steering member and founding board member of the Migration and Child Welfare National Network, a membership organization formed in 2006 in partnership with American Humane Association, BRYCS/United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, American Bar Association, University of Chicago, and other key agencies.

DISPROPORTIONALITY AND DISPARITY

Several California county child welfare directors have targeted disproportionality as a strategy in their Redesign efforts. All anchor counties have committed to addressing this issue. Representatives from key child welfare policy agencies in California¹⁰ have met in 2006 and are developing a strategy for a statewide effort modeled on the breakthrough series collaborative methodology. In addition to AECF and Casey Family Programs (CFP), the East Bay Community Foundation has provided support for the development of the Initiative. Primary funding for the initiative itself will be provided by CFP and the California Department of Social Services, along with support from AECF. In 2006, the foundation provided support to the efforts underway in San Francisco and Fresno, and began discussions with the Pomona office of Los Angeles County about launching RDD activities in 2007.

⁹ The report is available online at http://www.aecf.org/publications/data/immigration_final.pdf.

¹⁰ Representatives from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Casey Family Programs, the Child and Family Policy Institute, CALSWEC, the California Dept. of Social Services, CWDA, and others participated in disproportionality planning meetings.

BIRTH PARENT PARTICIPATION MODELS

Most of the F2F site reported they have or are developing a birth parent partnership or engagement program in their county in 2006¹¹. Using parents who have successfully reunified with their children, these program models include developing:

- Parent handbook and DVD videos for new families entering the system;
- Utilizing models such as “Parent Partner”, “Mentor Mom and Dads”
- Orientation, advocacy, and leadership training;
- Working with community-based substance abuse treatment programs; and
- Ice Breakers meetings between foster parent and birth parents.
- Three counties have utilized the Building a Better Future curriculum and technical assistance from AECF Consultants, Sandra Jimenez and Randy Jenkins.

EDUCATION

More than half of the F2F sites reported assigning a foster youth educational liaison to work with their school districts. This relationship has improved education access and outcomes for the county’s foster youth and increased Social Worker awareness. Often the educational liaison partners with the local educational institutions to advocate for the implementation of AB 490 and other educational issues. In some counties, an educational representative participates in TDMS to ensure that the educational/academic supports are addressed. The Stuart Foundation funded Mental Health Advocates and Cal. State L.A. to provide technical assistance to F2F counties in this area. Seven counties received full support. In addition, this technical assistance team developed a parent handbook in English and Spanish which is posted on our website www.f2f.ca.gov. A few F2F Counties have developed their own education handbook, held Foster Youth education summits and have regular education committee meetings. Two F2F counties were included in a group of ten national sites selected by Casey Family Programs to be part of the Breakthrough Series Collaborative, “Improving Educational Stability for Children in Out-of-Home Care.”

¹¹ Birth parent participation models were a topic at a F2F coordinator’s meeting in 2006, which lead to development of a useful handout (<http://www.f2f.ca.gov/res/BirthParent.pdf>).