

CALIFORNIA FAMILY TO FAMILY HIGHLIGHTS REPORT: 2007

Report Summary/Introduction

Information contained in following report was self-reported by participating Family to Family counties to highlight their work and accomplishments for 2007.





The California Family to Family Initiative

Highlights of County Activities—January to December 2007

Introduction

This report provides a highlight of the activities of the California Family to Family (F2F) counties from January to December 2007. F2F is a national child welfare and foster care reform initiative developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) in 1992. Partners in the California F2F Initiative include the AECF, the Stuart Foundation, the Walter S Johnson Foundation, and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). Currently, 25 out of 58 California counties participate in the F2F Initiative. Approximately 87 percent of the 72,147 children in California child welfare supervised foster care are living in a F2F county (Data from Center for Social Services at UC Berkeley, June, 2008).

Convenings and Technical Assistance

During 2007, F2F counties in California were divided into four regional cluster groups—Northern, Bay Area, Central/Coastal and Southern. Four regional cluster trainings, two northern county trainings and one statewide conference were held during 2007, training approximately 700 individuals. The Center for Family Focused Practice at UC Davis coordinates all the convenings. Three F2F Coordinator meetings and one California Anchor Site Coordinator meeting were held during 2007 as a forum for peer-to-peer information sharing and support. In addition, F2F Coordinators were able to participate in a national F2F Coordinators meeting. A listserv with relevant child welfare articles and resources is provided to all California F2F sites. A Family to Family website, www.f2f.ca.gov is hosted by 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 between the ages of 14 and 24.

The **outcome goals** of Family to Family are:

- 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.

Pacific Region and Reorganization

As of January 2007, California joined Alaska and Washington to form the Pacific Region of F2F. This change was part of the reorganization of the national F2F model by the AECF to develop a regionalized structure for all F2F sites—Pacific Region, Mountain West, Northeast/Midwest and Southeast. In addition, the three-year F2F evaluation began in 2007. Fourteen F2F sites across the country will participate in the national evaluation over the next two years. The sites selected by AECF are called anchor sites.¹ Five of the fourteen AECF selected anchor sites are located in California². Four additional sites were selected to be California anchors, with the support of the Stuart Foundation³ 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 California sites receive technical assistance due to the unique public/private partnership that utilizes support from local and national foundations, and CDSS. The strategic use of blended funds enables California to provide support to counties and begin the planning needed to sustain and institutionalize these F2F reform efforts.

F2F Four Core Strategies

RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

Almost all sites have developed some form of a recruitment plan/strategy, often for targeted recruitment. In some counties this has included the development of regional or neighborhood strategies and providing information, orientations, and training in Spanish. These plans have been supported through work with local faith based organization, schools/local colleges, tribes, foster youth and the community to recruit needed resource families. Many of the counties are using Icebreaker⁴ meetings, mandatory or voluntary, between birth and foster parents to increase communication and ensure the best care for children/youth. Resource families are able to access some level of respite care or other supportive services, such as foster parent “socials,” connections to Parent Partners/Mentors, support “hotlines,” celebration and appreciation days, and information through newsletters/mailings. In counties where formal respite care is not offered, local resource families have often developed informal support networks. In addition, resource families are increasingly involved in Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings. Finally, counties have reported an increase in the number of interested potential resource families, the number of resource families overall, the number of siblings placed together, and a decrease in placement moves and placement in group homes.

Examples of successful RDS efforts included:

- Developing the “Top Ten Goals and Expectations” for staff for working with resource families to help increase communication, collaboration and retention.

¹ 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

² The five national AECF anchor counties in CA are Alameda, Fresno, Los Angeles, Orange, and San Francisco

³ The four Stuart anchor counties in CA are Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Luis Obispo, and Riverside counties.

⁴ 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.

- Using geographically assigned Foster Parent Resource Staff to provide resources and training to local resource families, including hosting “Coffee Connections,” supporting informal resource parent networking opportunities, and hosting a Movie Night.
- Developing a Recruitment and Retention Program unit to support resource families (geographically), to sponsor recruitment events, make home visits, provide education and training, and make referrals to appropriate community services.
- Holding “Taking Care of Business” days to allow potential resource families to complete most licensing requirements in one day.
- Hosting local Heart Gallery photography or other art shows to highlight children and youth in need of an adoptive placement as well as celebrate families.
- Developing topic specific support groups for resource families/adoptive parents based on needs identified through exit interviews with resource families.
- Meeting with local Tribal representatives to target the specific needs of Native American children placed in out of home care.
- Reviewing and revising the current foster parent training curriculum to ensure that it includes information about the child welfare system, including how it works, requirements, available resources, and specific contacts for guidance on issues. In addition, utilizing a Foster Parents of Adolescents Subcommittee to serve as an ongoing forum for foster parent training to support their role in fostering connections between children, youth and their families.
- Recruiting community members who would be willing to provide respite care without compensation and working to ensure that respite providers have necessary information on children’s needs and behaviors as well as behavioral interventions.
- Hosting a pool party for foster, relative and non-relative extended family member (NREFM) children and families as well as child welfare staff and their families to improve communication.
- Hosting monthly Information Outreach Sessions, in collaboration with California Youth Connection (CYC) and current foster parents, to provide information to potential resource families.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Through the implementation of the Building Community Partnerships (BCP) strategy, counties have been able to strengthen current partnerships with government/agency and community-based partners, as well as engage new partners. Many counties reported new strategies to work more with faith based organizations to help with recruitment of resource families, provide support to local families, and share resources. A few counties are increasing their outreach to Native American communities to meet the needs of native children and youth. Communication and outreach efforts to existing and new partners were supported through the use of local community-wide events within counties to share information and celebrate families. Counties also reported the participation of community partners in planning efforts, workgroups and as well as in Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings, demonstrating an increased conformability with and willingness to “open their doors” to the community.

Examples of successful BCP efforts included:

- Working with local Native American Tribes to assess the potential to develop an Indian Child Welfare (ICWA) Unit and continuing work with the Oregon Research Institute’s Recruiting Rural Parents for Indian Children (RRPIC) program to recruit Native American homes.
- Developing the Engage Assess Service Empower (ESAE) unit to support chronic neglect families (having three or more referrals) through connection to community service providers for intensive case management.

- Inviting staff and community members/partners to participate on one of three countywide workgroups focused on policy and procedures, worker location and productivity, and development of a regional resource fair. Hosting a regional “meet and greet” to allow community partners to promote and discuss their services and programs with county social workers.
- Creating a Community Relations Manager position.
- Holding bi-monthly meetings with community partners to strengthen relationships and solicit feedback on operations, policies and protocols as well as identify challenges.
- Working with community liaisons to make connections to local communities, convene meetings with community partners to inform them of the needs of resource families, birth families, caregivers, children and youth, attending TDMs, and helping to locate space within the community to hold TDMs.
- Forming a partnership with local community-based organization (CBOs) in three target areas to connect “low risk” families with services.
- Developing a joint response program with law enforcement to reduce the number of children coming into care, with a major emphasis on children of color. This joint response program has expanded beyond the initial target community/city and has been implemented throughout the county.

TEAM DECISIONMAKING

Team Decisionmaking: Facilitators

During 2007, continued support, training, and guidance on the implementation of Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings was provided through a national California based AECF Technical Assistant (TA) consultant, 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 national TDM Facilitators meeting was held in August 2007. In addition, five 5-day TDM Facilitator Trainings, through coordination with UC Davis, were held throughout the year. Approximately 69 participants attended the TDM facilitator trainings. By the end of 2007, there were approximately 300 trained TDM facilitators (full-time and back-up) and those who supervise TDM facilitators. As part of the California System Improvement Plan (SIP), TDM has been adopted as the approach to implementation of the youth transitions/permanence component.

Team Decisionmaking: Implementation

Twenty-four of the 25 California F2F counties have rolled out TDMs. TDMs were held in counties for intake, risk of removal, emergency placement, placement preservations/changes, and exit from placement/reunification. Many counties report the participation of birth parents, youth, resource families/parents, agency partners, and community members/partners in TDMs, thus increasing the use of collaborative decision making for families, children and youth. A number of counties invite feedback and suggestions from these participants through the use of participant surveys. When possible, counties also reported that they are increasing the use of community locations to hold meetings, which can help support participation by families and their support systems as well as community partners and members. Counties are also working on implementing TDM firewalls to ensure that TDMs are held.

Examples of successful TDM efforts included:

- Having agency partner staff attend TDMs to help link families to services, provide resources and referrals, and share important information to inform placement decisions. This includes working with CalWORKS, local school staff and Foster Youth Services staff.
- Holding regular “dialogues”/meetings with social workers, staff, TDM facilitators and TDM facilitator supervisors to help identify challenges about the TDM process (including logistics and action plans), discuss solutions, and support the continued training and development of TDM Facilitators.

- Setting a permanent schedule for orientation sessions for interested community representatives who want to attend TDMs.
- Implementing TDMs in the local probation agency for probation youth.
- Reminding social workers of the importance of the TDM process through strategic, internal outreach—posting flyers entitled “Remembering Why we Hold TDMs and Family Unit Meetings” and distributing buttons that say “got tdm?”
- Utilizing Parent Leaders to help explain the value of TDMs and the TDM process to birth parents, and attend meetings with the parents to provide support and act as a resource.
- Developing a policy to hold TDMs for all African American infants aged 12 months and under to help decrease the disproportionate number of African American infants entering care.
- Providing monthly consultation to TDM facilitators through a partnership with a local domestic violence organization to develop strategies for use in-the-moment during TDMs with present or suspected domestic violence and support the development of a domestic violence protocol.
- Embracing the philosophy of “Once a TDM family, always a TDM family.” Children and families who have had an initial TDM are required to have subsequent TDMs prior to any placement change. Children currently served under any child welfare program become eligible for the TDM process if they have at least one eligible sibling.

Team Decisionmaking: Database

All F2F sites are required to submit Quarterly TDM reports, which includes the number of TDMs, types of TDMs held, recommendations made during TDMs, and who attended TDMs. The California TDM database team, which consists of F2F TDM 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. In 2007, efforts began to develop a new TDM database through Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) web-based software. Usage of the ETO TDM database will begin in 2008 with the migration of existing TDM data from the old MS Access database (migration of all counties’ data is targeted for summer 2008). The ETO interface allows counties to have greater ease in entering data and retrieving reports, thus supporting their efforts for continual self evaluation. In addition, the ETO TDM database, and related ETO strategy databases, will be used to support the completion of the F2F three-year national evaluation.

As of the end of 2007, UC Berkeley reported the following data for the CA F2F TDM Data:

- Twenty-four (24) California counties reported holding TDMs.
- At least 64,657 recommendations were made in TDM meetings during the two-year period October 1, 2005 through September 30, 2007.
- Most TDM recommendations were conducted for imminent risk of placement (46.0 percent), the next largest group was for potential placement moves (25.8 percent), followed by emergency placements (19.0 percent). Recommendations made regarding exits from placement accounted for 9.1 percent of the total.

SELF EVALUATION

Site Self Evaluation teams/workgroups provide data reports and analysis to internal strategy and administrative teams as well as external/community partners. F2F sites continue to use the UC Berkeley Child Welfare Research Center website: <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/defaultStatic.asp>. Through the development of the new dynamic reporting interface of the website, sites are able to produce custom data tables. This capability also allows sites to “drill down” to a number of sub-categories. Many of the sites merged the evaluation work required of AB636, Redesign, and F2F into one working group.

Examples of successful Self Evaluation efforts included:

- Continually reviewing the relationship between TDM meeting outcomes and Structured Decision Making (SDM) safety decisions as well as the number of emergency placement TDMs and removals. Data are shared with the TDM strategy workgroups and the agency Operations Team.
- Sharing data with internal staff and external community partners through PowerPoint Presentations, graphic displays, newsletters, periodic “tune-up” flyers, etc.
- Producing data at the neighborhood level to assist with the development of targeted strategies to meet neighborhood-level needs and reviewing data by ethnicity to address issues of disparity and disproportionality.
- Completing specific studies/analyses on re-entry into foster care and factors associated with timely family reunification. These studies included reviewing individual cases, data in Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS), and data on Structured Decision Making.
- Using data on a regular basis to justify changes in practice, such as convening TDMs or working with birth parents to reduce placement changes and/or reunify children more quickly.
- Reflecting on implementation challenges and successes through the F2F national evaluation questionnaire designed for coordinators from anchor sites. Interview responses and site outcome data will be analyzed as part of the evaluation that will be completed in 2009.

CALIFORNIA CONNECTED BY 25 INITIATIVE (CC25I):⁵

The California Connected 25 Initiative (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 six counties⁶ 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 that 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.

Examples of successful CC25I efforts included:

- Fresno—Launching a Host Family Model Program that provides housing and supportive services for up to twenty youth by allowing them to continue to live in their foster family placements or with a caring adult with whom they have a permanent connection.
- Santa Clara—Partnering with local community colleges to develop college and career pathways, providing a Financial Literacy Program that includes access to the establishment of Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), providing a number of housing options, tracking data for youth involved in the Independent Living Skills programs, and collaborating with local educational partners and non-profits to improve educational outcomes for children K-12 and youth ages 18 to 24.

⁵ For more information about CA Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I), <http://www.f2f.ca.gov/California25.htm>

⁶ The six CC25I California Counties are , Fresno, Humboldt, Orange, San Francisco, Santa Clara, and Stanislaus.

- San Francisco—Continuing to develop strong partnerships with Workforce Development, the Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP), a local youth advocacy organization and the local community college (through the Guardian Scholars Program) to increase youth access to vocational training and educational opportunities. Developing a tool to assist with co-case management of youth involved in child welfare and juvenile detention. Creating a permanency grid to support social workers to increase understanding of decisions on permanency.
- Stanislaus—Providing a transitional housing program, convening Emergency Connected for Life Meetings prior to youths’ permanency hearings to help establish lifelong connections and identify future goals, holding monthly Connected for Life/Foster Youth Transition Committee meetings to discuss emerging issues and develop strategies to enhance permanency and transitions services, and providing tutoring services to support educational attainment and outcomes for youth.
- Orange—Developing contracts with the Orangewood Children’s Foundation, Orange County Department of Education, Bridging the Gap, and Foster Assessment Center and Testing Services, to support foster and emancipated youth through a wide variety of programs and services, including independent living coaches, educational tracking and support, vocational assessments, mentoring, and transitional housing.
- Humboldt—Developing a CC25I One-Stop location and youth positions to provide peer mentoring. Analyzing cross-systems data, mapping local programs and resources, exploring models and best practices, and conducting focus groups with foster youth, in order to create a comprehensive strategy and implementation plan to improve outcomes in the areas of secondary/postsecondary education and employment/career pathways.
- Solano County is conducting a Self Assessment and is expected to join the Initiative in August 2008.
- Glenn County is conducting a Self Assessment and is expected to join the Initiative in November 2008.

Other Related Areas of Work

FOSTER YOUTH PERMANENCE, YOUTH TRANSLATION AND YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

F2F counties continue to support permanency for youth as well as recognize the importance of including current and former foster youth in system improvement and practice change efforts. Counties have implemented a number of strategies to increase engagement and collaboration with youth, including Youth Advisory boards, coordination with local chapters of California Youth Connection (CYC) and their related Speakers’ Bureaus, and participation of youth in strategy workgroups, presentations, and recruitment and training of resource families. Increased partnerships with probation, education and workforce departments has also helped to highlight the need of permanency and lifelong connections for youth. Thirteen F2F counties participant in the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP)⁷, sponsored in part by the Stuart Foundation, the Zellerbach Family Fund and the Walter S. Johnson Foundation. Counties also include both birth parents and former foster youth in the training of resource families. Finally, many counties currently or will implement the Transitional Housing Program (THP) and/or the Transitional Housing Plus Program (THP+) to meet youths’ housing needs.

Examples of successful Youth Engagement efforts included:

- Developing a Transitional Housing Program Network with administrators from *all* established transitional housing programs that serve current and former foster youth. The network was formed to ensure the highest quality of programs and provide an effective continuum of care for youth. Collaborating with *all* public agencies that serve transition aged youth—juvenile and adult probation, children’s and adult’s mental health, health services, homeless services and education.

⁷ For more information about the California Permanency for Youth Project, <http://www.cypyp.org/updates.htm>.

- Serving youth through the Youth Employment Services (Y.E.S.) program, a collaboration between Employment Services and the Office of Education, to provide youth with job seeking skills, Regional Occupational Program (ROP) credits, and work experience.
- Developing contracts with local organizations and agencies—the Orangewood Children’s Foundation, Orange County Department of Education, Bridging the Gap, and the Foster Assessment Center and Testing Services—to provide former and emancipated youth with connections to independent living coaches, educational tracking and support, vocational assessments, mentoring, and transitional housing.
- Implementing, through collaboration with Casey Family Programs, Access Inc., and the San Diego Workforce Partnership, Operation Passport to provide youth with transition services, specifically financial literacy, employment preparation and connections to opportunities in the community.
- Building partnerships with local service clubs to secure donations to support youth, including gas cards, meal cards, household items and “care baskets.”
- Working to develop evidence-based mental health practices to address trauma and reduce associated behaviors to support placement stability and placement in family settings.
- Hiring a former foster youth, through the Youth Engagement Workgroup, to advise and work one-on-one with members of the Youth Advisory Council. Working with youth to help define how youth voice could play a stronger role in child welfare improvements/activities.

IMMIGRATION AND CHILD WELFARE

The intersection of immigration and child welfare continued to be a topic of discussion and interest during 2007. Counties had access to support from three California-based F2F consultants on issues related to immigration and child welfare. In addition, information, research and resources were shared with counties through a listserv and the “Immigrants in Child Welfare” section of the CDSS maintained Family to Family California website. The Migration and Child Welfare National Network (MCWNN), a membership organization formed in 2006 in partnership with the American Humane Association, BRYCS/United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the American Bar Association, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and other key agencies, acted as a “hub” for much of the work on immigration and child welfare. MCWNN members wrote articles and research papers, hosted a national conference, presented workshops at related conferences, presented to the California Blue Ribbon Commission, and provided technical assistance to child welfare agencies nationally. The California-based immigration liaison consultant for F2F is a steering member and founding board member of MCWNN.

Several F2F counties have addressed this emerging area of need by developing specialized immigration liaison positions, bilingual units, and/or developing Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with Mexican Consulates. In addition, a few counties hold meetings with child welfare and the Mexican Consulate/Mexican social services agency, when appropriate, to help determine if children/youth should remain in the United States or be reunited with extended family members in Mexico.

ELIMINATING RACIAL DISPARITY AND DISPROPORTIONALITY

Awareness of the need to eliminate racial disparity and disproportionality (ERDD) within the child welfare service system has increased among F2F counties. All California anchor sites are required to address disparity and disproportionality through their anchor plans. In 2007, F2F TA began to meet with a limited number of F2F sites to begin to build awareness about ERDD. These sites included Pomona (LA County), Fresno County and San Francisco County.

Planning to launch the CA Disproportionality Project, a statewide effort, continued in 2007. A Planning Team meeting was held on February and meetings with identified “experts” were held in May and November. The project is slated to begin in 2008 and is supported through funding by Casey Family Programs (CFP), AEFC and CDSS.

Examples of successful ERDD work included:

- Forming a task force to address ERDD within the agency system. Reviewing data—number of African American families receiving reunification services, initial removal TDMs, substance abuse assessment practices and policies, and guidelines for progressive visitation—to foster better outcomes for families.
- Building relationships with local tribes and developing policies and procedures in regards to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) to better meet the needs of Native American children, youth and families.
- Building awareness around ERDD issues and data with *both internal staff and external community partners*.
- Working with an external consultant to have facilitated discussions about ERDD with all level of child welfare staff in addition to stakeholders. Using the results of the discussions to begin developing training as well as a strategic plan to address disproportionality by building awareness and identifying challenges and related solutions.

BIRTH PARENT INVOLVEMENT/SUPPORT

Most sites have developed some model for including parent partners in their work with F2F. Activities have included developing Parent Leader/Mentor positions and involving birth parents in training sessions, presentations, strategy work planning, TDMs, and the recruitment of foster parents. In addition, a number of counties host new parent orientation sessions, often led or co-led with birth parents. Finally, a few counties regularly host events/celebrations to recognize the achievement of parents who have been reunified with their children.

Examples of successful birth parent involvement/support work included:

- Developing the Parent Advocate Program to link parent advocates, on a referral basis, with “first-time” parents participating in the Family Reunification program who have children aged three and under in out of home care. Parent advocates also facilitate Icebreaker meetings.
- Providing orientation sessions for new parents in both English and Spanish.
- Working with a local community-based organization to address housing needs for parents and families by providing hotel vouchers, short-term temporary housing, and long-term transitional housing.
- Including Parent partners in the hiring and training process for new social workers.
- Leveraging resources through AmeriCorp to develop Parent Partner positions.
- Providing a Court Orientation Program to educate birth parents about the Juvenile Court process, which includes a video with birth parents sharing their experiences.
- Securing a Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) grant to develop a program for birth parents with substance abuse challenges that impact their ability to care for their children.

EDUCATION

F2F counties have continued to work on addressing educational needs of children and youth. This work has included greater coordination and partnership with agency and community partners, including Foster Youth Services liaisons/coordinators. These partnerships have helped increase awareness about the impact of placement moves on educational outcomes, helped track and share data, increased participation by educational staff/providers at TDMs, and supported improvement in youths’ educational outcomes.

Examples of successful education work included:

- Maintaining an Educational Outcomes Project committee to regularly convene representatives from the school district, Department of Education, health, Court Appointed Special Advocates (ASA) and child welfare to address educational concerns for foster children and youth.

- Piloting a Freshman Foster Youth Orientation program to provide information to youth and their caregivers about academic needs of youth (i.e., foster care rights, communication with social workers, educational expectations, etc.), about AB490 and the role of the caregiver, and share experiences of former foster youth.
- Sharing data between child welfare and the Office of Education to help decrease the number of school days missed due to shelter placement, and track test data, overall attendance, test scores, credit earned and GPA.
- Working in collaboration with philanthropy, local colleges and universities, and other educational institutions to implement a regional Guardian Scholars program to provide access to academic services and supports, as well as financial assistance, to current and former foster youth pursuing a secondary degree.
- Employing an educational liaison to work with social workers and resource parents to address the educational needs of foster children and youth. The liaison also provided training to foster youth and resource parents on special education laws, college requirements and other relevant topics. In addition, the liaison actively advocates to implement AB490 and related educational law.
- Working with the local Foster and Homeless Youth Services (FYS) coordinator to increase access to educational opportunities for youth, increase awareness of the importance of education for youth, develop a tutoring program for youth working toward high school graduation, and develop a form to notify schools when a child/youth enters or exits care.