

California's Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration Project

Interim Report

December 1, 1998 – May 30, 2001

Submitted to:

California Department of Social Services

Children & Family Services Division

Submitted by:

Waiver Demonstration Project Evaluation Team

Center for Social Services Research

School of Social Welfare

University of California, Berkeley

May, 2001

California’s Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver
Demonstration Project
Interim Report

December 1, 1998 – May 30, 2001

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
I. Introduction	1
A. Overview of the Demonstration.....	1
B. Extended Voluntary Placement Component	2
1. Background and Context.....	2
2. Service Intervention Strategy and Current Status	3
3. Methodology	3
4. Implementation Status	6
C. Intensive Services Component.....	6
1. Background and Context.....	6
2. Service Intervention Strategy.....	9
3. Methodology	9
4. Implementation Status	19
II. Process Analysis – Preliminary Results	21
A. Extended Voluntary Placement Component.....	21
1. Methods and Procedures	21
2. Key Features and Implementation Status	24
3. Organizational Aspects	42

B. Intensive Services Component – Family Conferencing.....	46
1. Methods and Procedures.....	46
2. Key Features and Implementation Status.....	47
3. Organizational Aspects.....	52
4. Contextual Factors.....	55
5. Summary of Key Features.....	58
C. Intensive Services Component – Wraparound Study.....	60
1. Methods and Procedures.....	60
2. Key Features and Implementation Status.....	61
3. Organizational Aspects.....	65
4. Contextual Factors.....	74
D. Intensive Services Component – Community Mentoring.....	76
E. Intensive Services Component – Shared Family Care.....	77
1. Methods and Procedures.....	77
2. Key Features and Implementation.....	78
3. Organizational Aspects.....	80
III. Summary.....	81
V. References.....	83

Index to Tables and Figures

Table 1: Populations and characteristics of cases to be considered for EVC placements, as described in county proposals.....	25
Table 2: Number of children enrolled, by county and eligibility status.....	29
Table 3: Individual and case characteristics of children in the extended voluntary placement component.....	30
Table 4: Child’s age at entry to program and length of time in extended voluntary placement....	31
Table 5: Individual and case characteristics of children entered in CWS/CMS on or before 10/1/00.....	49
Table 6: Age at entry.....	50
Table 7: Number of months in the program – children who remained in the program as of 3/30/01 vs. children who exited prior to this date.....	50
Table 8: Characteristics of County ISFC Programs and ISFC Implementation Contexts.....	58
Table 9: Demographic Information.....	63
Table 10: Demographic Information.....	64
Table 11: Completed STF Collections (09/2000 – 03/2001).....	68
Table 12: Total Services By Group.....	68
Table 13: Mean Service Time (minutes).....	69
Table 14: Service Categories By Group.....	70
Table 15: Formal / Informal Services By Group.....	72
Table 16: Services Provided To (Variety of Recipients).....	72
Table 17: Location of Service Provision.....	73
FIGURE 1: Concrete Services by Collection Period.....	70
FIGURE 2: Case Management Services by Collection Period.....	71

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Interim Report presents information on California's Title IV-E Child Welfare Demonstration Project for the period beginning December 1, 1998 and ending on May 30, 2001.

In 1997, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Administration for Children and Families granted California a Title IV-E Waiver, under section 1130 of the Social Security Act. The purpose of granting Title IV-E waivers was to encourage the implementation of innovative services or service delivery systems in child welfare. Previously, Title IV-E federal funds were to be used exclusively for foster care maintenance. Under the Waiver, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is able to spend Title IV-E funds for foster care prevention, as well as for services designed to expedite the establishment of permanency for children currently in its child welfare system. California's Waiver Demonstration Project was designed to develop and test innovative strategies to reduce foster care placements and improve the well-being of abused and neglected children. California originally intended to implement and evaluate this flexible use of IV-E funds with three new approaches to child welfare services: the Kinship Permanence Component (KPC); the Extended Voluntary Placement Component (EVC); and the Intensive Services Component (ISC).

During the first two years of the project, a number of challenges and unanticipated circumstances led to the redesign of California's original evaluation plan. The changes were instituted to maintain the integrity and rigor of the research design given unforeseen events that occurred during the initial stages of program implementation. The statewide implementation of the KinGap Program precluded the implementation of the KPC, due to the fact that a true experiment with random assignment was no longer a viable research method for this component. The Waiver Evaluation team submitted a revised evaluation plan to CDSS in April 1999, but to date no decision has been made regarding the viability of this KPC revised evaluation plan. Because of slow implementation and low enrollment, the EVC was phased down, effective August 31, 2000.

California's Waiver Demonstration Project currently consists of the ISC only and is comprised of four substudies: Family Conferencing (ISFC); Wraparound Services (ISW); Community Mentoring (ISCM); and Shared Family Care (SFC). The specific goals of the Waiver demonstration project include: prevention of out-of-home placement; shorter lengths of stay in substitute care; and, improved child safety and well-being.

The California Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration Project evaluation was charged with completing three component studies; an impact study, a process evaluation, and a cost effectiveness study. *The following interim report presents preliminary findings from the process study for the EVC and the ISC for the period beginning December 1, 1998 to May 30, 2001.* As of May 30, 2001, San Francisco County continues discussions with CDSS regarding their participation in the Waiver project. Evaluation of Community Mentoring has been part of these discussions. Thus, no process or outcome data on ISCM are available to be included in this report. The Shared Family Care report is

submitted alongside this report and an overview of its highlights pertinent to Alameda and San Francisco counties are included in this interim report. *No outcome results will be presented in this report, given the small sample sizes and the recency of program implementation.* Although California's Waiver Demonstration Project officially began on December 1, 1998 with the implementation of EVC, no children entered ISC until June 6, 1999. Since EVC was phased down prematurely, no outcome data are available for that component. Given the slow implementation and low enrollment for the ISC, outcome data also are unavailable for this study component.

Process study findings suggest that the primary reason for the phase down of the EVC component was consistently low enrollment across all EVC counties. At the end of the first year of the project only three children were enrolled and at the time of phase down, no more than ten children were enrolled, only six of whom were Title IV-E (federally) eligible. The remaining four were state eligible.

Five issues consistently were mentioned by EVC county staff when barriers to participant enrollment were explored at site visits, consortium meetings and during provision of ongoing technical assistance regarding the evaluation. These included: (1) county staff concerns regarding the fact that courts did not count the time in voluntary placement in determining when to terminate reunification services and parental rights; (2) difficulty identifying which cases might benefit from an extended voluntary placement; (3) concern regarding the impact of parental liability for costs incurred during voluntary placement on project enrollment; (4) agency problems with staff recruitment, retention and workload and other resource limitations; and (5) an overestimation of existing voluntary placement cases, resulting from county difficulties maintaining accurate CWS/CMS records for children who were voluntarily placed.

As of May 30, 2001, ISFC has a total of 42 IV-E eligible study children enrolled. Enrollment progress in the two ISFC counties continues to be a concern for the ISFC program and evaluation. Both counties have experienced delays in enrollment due to structural barriers. After examining the characteristics of children entering foster care, one county determined that for every forty children screened, only one met their ISFC program enrollment criteria. Additionally, staff from this county reported that they were experiencing a shortage of both foster parents and openings in specially trained foster family homes. This county also had difficulty recruiting child welfare workers for their ISFC program, due to a combination of county program manager reluctance to release staff for the ISFC program, staff shortages and workload issues.

Staff from the other participating ISFC county has attributed their enrollment slow-down to various factors, including a lack of family members available to attend family conferences, an overall slowdown in the number of new referrals to the agency and staff availability during holiday and vacation periods. ISFC program staff reported that they might need to slow their enrollment process down temporarily due to staff turnover and time constraints. A telephone conference was held with county staff, CDSS and the evaluation team in order to solve enrollment problems. During this conference, county program staff requested permission from CDSS and the evaluation team to modify the

selection criteria for the program, eliminating case-specific criteria in order to broaden the pool of eligible cases. These changes were agreed upon.

Changes in both counties are expected to speed up the enrollment process and result in increased family recruitment into the ISFC study. The evaluation team intends to continue to monitor the enrollment progress of both counties and provide technical assistance in collaboration with CDSS as needed.

As of May 30, 2001, there are 271 study children enrolled in the ISW. The majority of study children in the ISW (N=136) were enrolled in one county. The four remaining counties have been slow to implement their programs and to enroll children. County staff reported that they have encountered an array of difficulties as they have implemented their programs: some of the barriers affect multiple counties; others are unique to a specific county. All counties indicated that the paradigm shift required to implement Wraparound comprehensively presented barriers to implementation. The basic tenets of Wraparound (e.g., strengths-based, community-based, individualized services), while similar to other innovative programs being implemented (e.g., intensive family preservation services, family group conferencing), have not been institutionalized and remain a fairly novel way of thinking about working with children and families. Generally, the necessary core group in any given county has embraced the innovation. Encouraging everyone involved in the implementation of Wraparound to embrace the change required, however, has been a difficult and on-going process. For example, in one county child welfare workers view Wraparound as a family reunification program, an anathema due to the recent death of a reunified child.

County staff also indicated the difficult nature of overcoming organizational barriers as public and private agencies, as well as different departments in public organizations (e.g., child welfare, mental health, probation), sought to work together. The collaborative nature of service provision specified by Wraparound brings to the fore philosophical and technical differences. Language, taken for granted by individuals within a department or agency, presents difficulties for those outside of that department or agency. In another example, divisions within a department often are reluctant to alter their standardized practices to accommodate a small demonstration project focused on innovation.

Staff turnover and a shortage of quality candidates also are issues that have had an impact on Wraparound implementation efforts, particularly for private service providers. The intensity of working with a caseload of children and families facing the obstacles outlined in this report has made it difficult for public and private agencies to retain staff. Finding new, qualified staff has been difficult as well due to a scarcity of appropriate candidates. Both situations have been compounded by a robust economy that has made social work positions such as these less attractive.

Finally, ISW county staff have expressed concern about the evaluation and its effect on client enrollment. County staff are particularly distressed about the use of random assignment, deeming it unethical. A number of county staff report widespread dissatisfaction with the possibility that some families may not receive Wraparound and

that referrals to their programs have suffered as a result. Several county staff also report that having to obtain documented consent from children and caregivers to participate in the study has limited their ability to enroll children and families in the study.

The next two and one-half years of the Demonstration Project will provide an opportunity for counties to further develop their programs and to address issues related to slow implementation and low enrollment. The process study will continue to explore issues and barriers related to implementation, as well as the social, organizational and contextual influences on the innovative programs supported by the Waiver. In the next part of the project, the evaluation team will be able to augment the findings from the process study with results from the impact and cost effectiveness studies to better identify important planning, program, and policy implications of California's statewide Waiver Demonstration Project.