

Child Welfare—Early Education Partnerships to Expand Protective Factors for Children With Child Welfare Involvement

The Children’s Bureau funded these projects to build capacity among State, local, or Tribal child welfare agencies and early childhood systems. The goal was to maximize the identification, enrollment, attendance, and supports of infants and young children, ages birth to 5 years, in foster care or under the supervision of child welfare services, into comprehensive, high-quality early care and education services. Communities built infrastructure to enhance their capacity to deliver multidisciplinary interventions to improve the socio-emotional and behavioral well-being of young children and their families through collaborative service delivery.

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Funding Opportunity Announcement

In 2011, the Children’s Bureau published a funding opportunity announcement (FOA) for *Child Welfare—Early Education Partnerships to Expand Protective Factors for Children With Child Welfare Involvement*. The 17-month infrastructure-building grants were to support collaborative initiatives between child welfare and early childhood systems to maximize enrollment, attendance, and supports of infants and young children who are in foster care into comprehensive, high-quality early care and education programs.

Through this funding opportunity, communities could develop new models or build on existing collaborative policies, procedures, and/or practices. According to the FOA, applicants were expected to address barriers to permanency and implement multidisciplinary interventions to improve the socio-emotional and behavioral well-being of children, ages birth to 5 years, and their families. The lessons from these initiatives would inform the field of strategies to support the optimal development of infants and young children in care by providing continuous quality care experiences. The FOA required grant applicants to propose viable partnerships among child welfare agencies, early childhood programs, and other critical stakeholders, such as child care, health, mental health agencies, and other post-permanency supports.

The overall goals of these projects were to:

- Foster strategic coordination and institutionalized communication among public child welfare, early childhood, and community organizations, and families with infants and young children in foster care
- Support the development of policies, practices, and/or procedures to increase the identification, enrollment, attendance, supports, and stability of infants and young children in foster care in comprehensive, high-quality, early care and education services
- Promote the awareness and utilization of multidisciplinary interventions and quality practices that increase protective factors and decrease risk factors to improve developmental outcomes for children, ages birth to 5 years, and their families

- Promote the development of policy, quality practice, and other strategies across systems aimed at increasing parental protective factors, developing children’s resiliency, and mitigating the effects of childhood trauma
- Collectively disseminate findings and support knowledge transfer from these projects to the field

FOA Information

FOA Title: Child Welfare—Early Education Partnerships to Expand Protective Factors for Children With Child Welfare Involvement

FOA Number: HHS-2011-ACF-ACYF-CO-0185

CFDA Number: 3.652

Approved Project Period: 10/1/2011 through 2/28/2013

Award Information

Funding Instrument Type: Grant

Estimated Total Funding: \$2,000,000

Expected Number of Awards: 8

Ceiling on Amount of Award: \$250,000 per budget period

Floor on Amount of Award: None

Average Projected Award Amount: \$250,000 per budget period

Length of Project Periods: 17-month project and budget period

Match: None

Eligible Applicants

- Eligible applicants for grant awards included:
 - State governments
 - County governments
 - City or township governments
 - Independent school districts
 - Public and State-controlled institutions of higher education
 - Native American Tribal governments (Federally recognized)
 - Native American Tribal organizations (other than Federally recognized Tribal governments)

- Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), other than institutions of higher education
- Nonprofits without 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of early learning and education

Grantees

Note: For ease of reading, projects will be identified by the State abbreviation for the State in which they are located. For example, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock project will be referred to as AR. Since two of the projects in the cluster were located in Florida, the Florida projects will be identified by the agency acronym, Family Support Services of North Florida (FSSNF) and Family Central, Inc. (FCI). Where available, links to site visit reports are provided.

State: Arkansas (AR)

Project Title: Building Bridges for Better Beginnings

Lead Agency: The University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) School of Social Work

Collaborating Partners: The Arkansas Division of Children and Families (DCFS), The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE), Court Appointed Special Advocates, Project PLAY, The UALR Survey Research Center, The Midsouth Training Academy

Award Number: 90CO1067

Contact: E. Christopher Lloyd, L.C.S.W., Ph.D., ecloyd@ualr.edu.

Target Population: Children ages birth to 5 years in the custody of the child welfare system

Key Grant Activities:

- Established a Leadership Team comprised of skilled and knowledgeable individuals from key stakeholder organizations
- Reviewed DCCECE and DCFS policies related to serving young children, ages 0–5 years, at risk of, or currently involved with, the state’s child welfare system and in need of (or already receiving) early childhood care, and revised the policy and practices to better meet the needs of these children

- Developed the Child Welfare-Child Care Information Toolkit used to facilitate communication of key information about a foster child (medical/mental health diagnoses, allergies and medications, etc.) among systems
- Developed and distributed CD-ROMs with useful resources related to child welfare and early care and education, and created and distributed DVDs that contained Building Bridges presentations
- Developed a series of three trainings (*Early Child Care and Child Welfare, Smooth Moves, and Interventions*) for early childhood education (ECE) providers/workers and DCFS staff

[Building Bridges Children’s Bureau Express Article AR Final Report](#)

State: California (CA)

Project Title: Los Angeles Child Welfare-Early Education Partners Infrastructure Project (LACWEEP)

Lead Agency: Center for Healthier Children, Families, and Communities at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

Collaborating Partners: Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) South County Regional Office, the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) Office of Head Start, and the Inter-University Consortium

Award Number: 90CO1062

Contact: Todd Michael Franke, Ph.D., tfranke@ucla.edu

Target Population: Children, ages birth to 4 years, under the supervision of DCFS residing in the City of Long Beach

Key Grant Activities:

- Implemented a system for referring and linking DCFS children in Long Beach whom LBUSD Head Start (HS)/ Early Head Start (EHS) agencies did not have the capacity to serve to other high-quality ECE providers

- Developed the Information-Sharing Protocol that provides a detailed account of the consent procedures and various types of information/documentation that must be exchanged in order for DCFS to refer a child to LBUSD HS/EHS or to a non-LBUSD ECE program and the procedures that allow LBUSD to share educational information with DCFS
- Recruited representatives from 19 organizations to serve on the LACWEEP Advisory Committee
- Developed and implemented a series of trainings for Long Beach DCFS staff, ECE providers, court personnel, and parents/caregivers of infants and young children on the benefits of early childhood education for children in the child welfare system and how to navigate the systems to obtain services
- Expanded the electronic DCFS-HS referral system to include LBUSD HS and EHS agencies
- Developed the Data Infrastructure Development Plan that described the DCFS, LBUSD HS, and LBUSD K-12 data management systems and how data from these systems could be linked to facilitate the tracking of ECE service utilization and associated developmental, school, safety, and permanency outcomes for children supervised by DCFS enrolled in LBUSD's HS/EHS programs

[CA Site Visit Report](#)

[CA Final Evaluation Report](#)

State: Colorado (CO)

Project Title: Colorado Partnership in Early Childhood Education Services (PIECES)

Lead Agency: Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Welfare

Collaborating Partners: State partners: Department of Public Health, Office of Behavioral Health, Head Start Collaboration Office, the Lieutenant Governor's Early Childhood Leadership Commission, and the Office of Early Childhood

Award Number: 90CO1060

Contact: Jill Jordan, jill.jordan2@state.co.us

Target Population: Children, ages birth to 5 years, in out-of-home care

Key Grant Activities:

- Established State and local leadership teams to guide the project at the State level and at the community level
 - The local sites were selected based on their interest in the grant, and that the child welfare agency and the early childhood councils in the counties had established relationships prior to the grant award.
 - The counties selected were Jefferson, Fremont, and El Paso.
- Developed and implemented a cross agency referral, screening, and tracking process for families and children involved in both child welfare and early childhood services
- Developed and distributed a PIECES bulletin to inform the field about the project
- Developed and/or provided training to child welfare staff, early childhood education staff, parents/caregivers, and the general public on topics about and/or relevant to child welfare and early education
- Implemented the Strengthening Families protective factors framework at the local sites

[CO PIECES Final Report](#)

[CO PIECES Final Evaluation Report](#)

[CO PIECES Site Visit Report](#)

State: Connecticut (CT)

Project Title: The Early Childhood Collaborative

Lead Agency: Department of Children and Families (DCF)

Collaborating Partners: Connecticut Head Start Office

Award Number: 90CO1061

Contact: Nancy DiMauro, nancy.dimauro@ct.gov

Target Population: Infants and young children ages birth to 5 years

Key Grant Activities:

- Expanded the Early Childhood-Child Welfare (ECCW) Partnerships by conducting statewide quarterly meetings facilitated and supported by the CT Head Start State Collaboration Office

- Provided training to members of the ECCW Partnerships on the Strengthening Families Framework and *Working in Collaboration to Support Families With Challenges*
- Modified the DCF case management system to automatically identify every child from birth to 5 years of age in an open case so an assessment of the child’s educational and developmental needs can be conducted
- Established an Early Childhood Community of Practice specifically organized to coordinate statewide change initiatives as they relate to Early Childhood and ensure that policy development and statewide practice changes reflect the unique needs of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers and their families
- Developed the early childhood practice guide *Supporting Families With Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers*
- Established and implemented the CW-EEP Certification Program that allows providers to become preferred providers for young children in foster care
- Developed an electronic child care subsidy application process, a data system to capture the number of children in foster care enrolled in early childhood programs, and a Geographic Information System to map all licensed child care providers and private providers that are quality-rated by the ELC
- Implemented annual training for child welfare caseworkers, caregivers, and guardians ad litem about the importance of early education and local resources available
- Provided trauma-informed care and classroom management training for the local child care centers that most often work with children in the child welfare system
- Developed new policy requiring (1) developmental screenings for children entering foster care, (2) caseworkers to have contact with child care providers, and (3) prospective foster parents to explore potential child care providers

[CT Final Report](#)

[CT Site Visit Report](#)

State: Florida (FL/FSSNF)

Project Title: Child Welfare-Early Education Partnership (CW-EEP)

Lead Agency: Family Support Services of North Florida, Inc.

Collaborating Partners: Child Guidance Center, Episcopal Children’s Services, Jacksonville Urban League, Florida Department of Children and Families, Jacksonville Children’s Commission, Early Learning Coalition (ELC) of Duval County, Mental Health Resource Center, Florida State College at Jacksonville, University of North Florida, Northeast Early Steps, and Guardians Ad Litem
Award Number: 90CO1065

Contact: Cynthia Harpman, Cynthia.Harpman@fssnf.org

Target Population: Children, ages birth to 5 years, in the child welfare system

Key Grant Activities:

- Developed the CW-EEP Oversight Committee that met monthly to discuss strategies to improve early education opportunities for children in foster care

[FL/FSSNF Final Report](#)

Site Visit Report: *Not yet published*

State: Florida (FL/FCI)

Project Title: Broward’s Infrastructure Design to Guide and Sustain Permanency for Young Foster Children (BRIDGES)

Lead Agency: Family Central, Inc.

(<http://www.familycentral.org/welcome>)

Collaborating Partners: Broward County’s Early Learning Coalition, ChildNet¹, the Early Steps Children’s Diagnostic Treatment Center, Broward County Schools, United Way, and the Children’s Services Council

Award Number: 90CO1063

Contact: Mark Gross, PhD, mgross@familycentral.org

Target Population: Young children, ages birth to 5 years, in foster care

¹ ChildNet is the private agency that provides child welfare, family preservation, and foster care services in Broward County.

Key Grant Activities:

- Developed the BRIDGES Governance Committee made up of senior representatives from the partner agencies
- Developed and implemented a quality child care certification designed to meet the unique needs of children in foster care
- Developed or contracted for numerous trainings for child care providers, court officers, child welfare staff, foster parents, and caregivers
- Developed and implemented transdisciplinary staffings that allow all providers involved with a child to meet and develop a plan to ensure the child's needs are addressed
- Created and distributed the foster parent school readiness handbook

[FL/FCI Site Visit Report](#)

[FL/FCI Final Evaluation Report](#)

[FL/FCI Final Project Report](#)

State: Georgia (GA)**Project Title: Ensuring Positive Investment in Children**

Lead Agency: The Augusta Partnership for Children, Inc. (APC)

Collaborating Partners: Richmond County Department of Family and Children Services (RCDFCS), Richmond County Health Department, Children Unique Christian Day Care Center, Kids Restart, Jones Behavioral Health, Richmond County Juvenile Court, Richmond County School System, Central Savannah River Area Economic Opportunity Authority Head Start, University of Georgia Extension Services, Bright from the Start, Rape Crisis and Sexual Assault Services, Child Care Resource and Referral Agency of Southeast Georgia

Award Number: 90CO1064

Contact: Robetta McKenzie,

rmckenzie@augustapartnership.org

Target Population: Infants and young children, ages birth to 5 years, at risk of foster care placement or in foster care

Key Grant Activities:

- Engaged community partners in interagency collaboration by including 14 agencies in the project planning and implementation
- Developed and implemented training for child care providers, DFCS staff, and health department personnel
- Screened all children referred to the project using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire and administered the Parenting Stress Index to parents/caregivers enrolled in the program

[GA Final Report](#)**State: Rhode Island (RI)****Project Title: Rhode Island Child Welfare-Head Start Partnership**

Lead Agency: Children's Friend and Service

Collaborating Partners: Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), the RI Head Start Association, RI Family Court, the RI Child Welfare Advisory Committee, RI Kids Count, the RI Interagency Coordinating Council, RI Early Learning Council, RI Department of Health, and Prevent Child Abuse RI

Award Number: 90C01066

Contact: Dana Mullen, dmullen@cfsri.org

Target Population: Young children in foster care

Key Grant Activities:

- Established the RI Early Childhood Child Welfare Project Management Team, which met biweekly to design and direct the project
- Conducted activities to increase public awareness about Early Head Start/Head Start
- Assessed current workforce knowledge of child welfare and early childhood development concepts and best practices, and their ability to apply best practices as they work with young children in foster care

[RI Final Report](#)

Key Program Interventions/Activities

Grantees focused on organizational-level activities intended to coordinate systems and encourage knowledge transfer across the systems. This was appropriate, given that the primary intention of the FOA was to facilitate building an infrastructure to support collaborative initiatives between child welfare and early childhood systems. Organizational-level activities included:

▪ **Advisory Committees and/or Leadership**

Teams. These oversight bodies brought together representatives from child welfare and early childhood education (ECE), including Early Head Start (EHS), Head Start (HS), and child care providers, as well as other community stakeholders. These groups were responsible for planning the project, providing leadership, and monitoring project implementation.

- **AR** - Established a Leadership Team comprised of individuals from key stakeholder organizations. The Leadership Team met weekly to organize the project. The Leadership Team members acted as liaisons to their organizations to facilitate information sharing and obtain approval from administrators on issues related to the project.
- **CA** - Convened an advisory committee with representatives from 16 organizations. In addition, representatives from three other organizations joined the committee later in the grant period. The advisory committee met on a bi-monthly basis for a total of nine meetings. Within the advisory committee there was the core leadership team, comprised of local leaders from the ECE and the child welfare systems.
- **CO** - Established a State-led team that met monthly throughout the grant period. In addition, each local site maintained a leadership team. Project leadership in each community was shared between ECE and child welfare leadership staff. Each local work team included child welfare senior managers and directors, early childhood coordinating councils, Part C early intervention, HS, and mental health or

home visiting, and one council included a parent partner. The State team had monthly contact with the three local sites regarding grant activities and progress on meeting the goals each site identified in their proposal.

- **CT** - Expanded the Early Childhood-Child Welfare (ECCW) Partnerships by conducting statewide quarterly meetings facilitated and supported by the CT Head Start State Collaboration Office. These meetings provided opportunities for ongoing relationship building, special presentations and trainings, and information sharing, including sharing information about the ECCW grant.
- **FL/FSSNF** - Developed the CW-EEP Oversight Committee, which, in addition to FSSNF, had six key member organizations: Child Guidance Center, Episcopal Children’s Services, Jacksonville Urban League, Florida Department of Children and Families, Jacksonville Children’s Commission, and Early Learning Coalition of Duval County. All of the partners signed memos of agreement to participate, share information, and collaborate with FSSNF. The CW-EEP Oversight Committee met monthly to discuss strategies to improve early education opportunities for children in foster care.
- **FL/FCI** - Developed the BRIDGES Governance Committee. Members of the governance committee were senior representatives from the partner agencies who could make decisions on behalf of their agencies, as well as make decisions on final products and deliverables of the BRIDGES project.
- **GA** - Engaged community partners in interagency collaboration. Fourteen organizations were involved in the collaborative partnership and met monthly to discuss project implementation, including barriers and challenges, training opportunities, and sharing resources.
- **RI** - Established the RI Early Childhood Child Welfare Project Management Team (RI-ECCW Team) that included participation from members of Children’s Friend, Foster Forward, and the Bradley/Hasbro Children’s Research Center. The RI-ECCW

Team met biweekly to design and direct the project. The team met with key stakeholder groups to identify barriers to EHS/HS enrollment among foster children. In addition, the team completed a workforce competency survey, held open houses to promote EHS/HS enrollment among foster children, created and disseminated brochures and other information about EHS/HS, developed Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) between key organizations, and collaborated on a successful promotional event.

- **Service integration procedures.** All of the projects within this cluster devoted considerable time and effort to the review and/or revision of agencies' policies and procedures. The goals were to identify policy barriers and gaps that may impede access to or continuity of high-quality child care/early education and to increase awareness of early learning benefits and enrollment of young children in early learning programs. The development of new policies, procedures, and practices promoted collaboration in enrolling children into early care and education programs and increased communication between child welfare staff and child care/early education staff.
 - **AR** - Policy review and revision
 - Reviewed DCCECE and DCFS policies related to serving the target population and revised the policy and practices to better meet the needs of these children, including changing how child care subsidy vouchers are awarded and following children through changes in early child care providers and/or child welfare placements.
 - Developed, as part of the policy review, the Child Welfare-Child Care Information Toolkit. The toolkit includes a brief form that contains relevant information about the child (medical/mental health diagnoses, allergies, and medications, etc.) completed by the DCFS caseworker when the child enters foster care and is provided to the foster parents and early child care provider.
 - **CA** - Referral and information sharing
 - Implemented a system for referring and connecting children served by DCFS in Long Beach whom LBUSD HS/EHS agencies did not have the capacity to serve to other high-quality ECE providers. The LACWEEP Community Liaison built partnerships with these providers throughout the Long Beach region and linked children supervised by DCFS to these programs when their needs could be better served by a non-LBUSD HS/EHS program.
 - Developed the Information-Sharing Protocol that provides a detailed account of the consent procedures for sharing various types of information/documentation—including proof of age, immunization records, current physical exam, letter from caseworker indicating DCFS involvement—that must be exchanged in order for DCFS to refer a child to LBUSD HS/EHS or a non-LBUSD ECE program. In addition, the protocol provided information on the procedures that allow LBUSD to share educational information with DCFS, including information about developmental screenings and assessments, attendance records, copies of existing Individualized Education Plans, mental health referrals, and health screenings.
 - **CO** - New processes implemented
 - Implemented the Strengthening Families protective factors framework at the local sites. Representatives from each partner agency attended the Strengthening Families training, either in person or online, and trained staff from their respective agencies. In addition, the partner agencies are incorporating the protective factors into their daily operations. El Paso County integrated the Strengthening Families framework into parenting education classes.
 - Each local site developed and implemented a cross-agency referral and screening process for families and children involved in both child welfare and early childhood services. In addition, a tracking system was developed to accurately capture the number of children dually served.

- **CT** - Policy review and toolkit development
 - Established an Early Childhood Community of Practice specifically organized to coordinate statewide change initiatives as they relate to early childhood and ensure that policy development and statewide practice changes reflect the unique needs of the target population and their families. The group reviewed policy as it related to young children, and recommended policy changes and policy development to support a developmentally informed child welfare system. The group made recommendations regarding visitation for younger children and conducting developmental screenings for young children entering foster care.
 - Developed the Early Childhood Practice Guide *Supporting Families With Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers*. The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), DCF, and the Office of Head Start created this toolkit for child welfare and child care practitioners that provides a comprehensive set of tools, information about statewide and local resources, links to various early childhood websites, and strategies for working with families with very young children.
- **FL/FSSNF** - Developed and implemented policy
 - Established the requirement for prospective foster parents to explore, select, and contact three child care providers from the Guiding Stars program to discuss using their services if a child under 5 years of age is placed in their home. This process is intended to help foster parents understand the importance of high-quality child care and early education services and to have an established relationship with one or more high-quality child care providers.
 - Implemented new policy that requires child welfare caseworkers to contact the child's child care provider within 2 weeks of receiving the case and exchange contact information and obtain a copy of the child care provider's schedule. Caseworkers are now required to consider the child care and/or early education services provider's schedule when scheduling appointments and visits with parents.
- Developed and implemented a policy that requires all children entering foster care to have an initial screening using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, as well as a Child Behavioral Health Assessment, to ensure that social and emotional needs are detected. If it is determined that a child has a need, more extensive testing occurs and referrals to the appropriate providers are made. FSSNF is able to track the referrals made and the participation of the child in the appropriate treatment and/or program.
- Developed a quality checklist that helps families look at specific characteristics of quality child care and early education services and compare their options side-by-side.
- **FL/FCI** - Developed and implemented transdisciplinary staffings that allow all providers involved with a child to meet and to develop and implement a plan to ensure a child's needs are addressed and developmental goals are established and achieved. These staffings are conducted when a child in foster care needs additional support or access to community resources and services. The foster parents, the family, the child care staff, the child welfare child advocate,² and service providers are invited to attend.
- **GA** - Conducted screenings and assessments
 - Screened all children referred to the project using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire to determine each child's developmental and social-emotional status in relation to their age and to educate parents on developmental milestones. Children were assessed in the areas of communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, and personal/social skills. Responses were scored to determine whether the child's development in each area was on schedule or whether the child should be referred for further assessment. The health department

² Child welfare caseworkers are referred to as child advocates in Broward County.

- (for those children enrolled in Children’s First), early childhood development program staff, or the APC case manager administered this instrument.
- Administered the Parenting Stress Index (PSI) to parents/caregivers enrolled in the program. The PSI identifies dysfunctional parenting and predicts the potential for parental behavior problems and child adjustment difficulties within the family system. The PSI includes four domains of parenting: Defensive Responding; “PD” Parental Distress; Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction; and Difficult Child and Total Stress
 - o **RI** - Involved stakeholders in collaborative planning to identify policies and procedures that are preventing linkages between child welfare and early learning programs, including enrollment and attendance in EHS/HS programs. The information from stakeholders indicated that many foster parents did not know about EHS/HS, while some DCYF staff did not believe it was their responsibility to ensure enrollment of foster children in an early learning program. As a result, an MOU was signed indicating that RI DCYF and RI Head Start Association agreed to collaborate to ensure that young children involved in the child welfare system have access to EHS/HS.
 - **Joint and cross-training.** Most projects offered child welfare and ECE staff training to promote better understanding of each agency’s services, responsibilities, policies, and programs, and recognition of their shared objectives in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for young children. Through the training, staff gained new knowledge and built skills, and in most projects, staff also developed and strengthened collaborative relationships with partnering agency staff.
 - o **AR** - Developed a series of three trainings:
 - Early Child Care and Child Welfare: training for child welfare or ECE/child care staff. The training included information about trauma, foster care, the key characteristics of quality ECE and the Better Beginnings standards, the child welfare system, and how to use the Child Welfare-Child Care Information Toolkit .
 - Smooth Moves: training for ECE/child care or child welfare workers (especially case workers involved in transporting children). Training included information on facilitating transitions into and out of child care, appointments with professionals, visitations with parents, etc., when working with children in general and children who have experienced trauma in particular.
 - Interventions: training for ECE/child care workers, case workers supervising visitations, or similar professionals. Simple, trauma-informed techniques, organized into three overarching themes, were taught so workers have more than simply ‘time-out’ in their repertoire of interventions. The training also emphasizes the difference between temper tantrums and meltdowns in children who have been exposed to trauma and suggests interventions for each event.
 - o **CA** - Developed and implemented a series of trainings for DCFS social workers, parents, ECE providers, and juvenile dependency court personnel, including attorneys, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and judges.
 - Training for ECE providers included a brief historical overview of the child welfare system, philosophical shifts in the role of public child welfare agencies, as well as information about the services provided by DCFS. ECE teachers also were trained on trauma-informed practice.
 - Training for DCFS social workers included detailed information about what constitutes an ECE program. Training components that were relevant to both ECE providers and DCFS social workers focused on how ECE enhances and supports child and family protective factors; research regarding the potential of ECE to improve developmental outcomes, school readiness for children, and reduce child

- maltreatment; the availability of and eligibility for free or subsidized ECE; and the structural limitations of the referral and enrollment process of the DCFS-LBUSD electronic referral system.
- Training for parents, foster parents, caregivers, and court personnel contained similar, although less detailed information. The training for parents also included information about navigating related service systems.
 - o **CO** - Developed and/or provided training to child welfare staff, early childhood education staff, parents/caregivers, and the general public. The training topics included:
 - Strengthening Families Framework
 - Early childhood education benefits
 - Quality early learning/child care provider selection
 - Brazelton Touchpoints program³ (Fremont)
 - Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act requirements
 - Child development
 - Ages and Stages Questionnaire
 - How to read developmental screening results
- In addition, one county (El Paso) educated the community about the child welfare system, while another (Jefferson) provided coaching and support to child care providers to improve the quality of their programs and conducted an Early Childhood Conference for community stakeholders.
- o **CT** - Provided training to members of the ECCW Partnerships. The project partnered with the CSSP to train staff on the Strengthening Families Framework. In addition, the project provided the Reflective Supervision Infant Mental Health Workshop Series: *Working in Collaboration to Support Families With Challenges* to partnership members across the State.
 - o **FL/FSSNF** - Developed and presented training to foster parents, child welfare caseworkers, ECE/child care specialists and providers, and court personnel.
 - Foster parents – One night of PRIDE⁴ training is dedicated to teaching prospective foster parents about the importance of early childhood education and high-quality child care, why and how to select high-quality child care and early education providers, and the Guiding Stars⁵ program. Trauma-informed care training is also provided to foster parents and relative caregivers. Foster parents and relative caregivers are also provided quarterly training on issues relevant to early education. A short training video describing the importance and benefits of early education, key indicators of quality child care and early education programs, and local service providers was created by CW-EEP for foster parents and kinship caregivers.
 - Child welfare caseworkers – The initial training for child welfare caseworkers includes a 2-hour presentation on the benefits of early childhood education presented by the ELC. In addition, in-service training relevant to ECE services is regularly provided to caseworkers, and training on the improved application process was also provided to caseworkers.
 - Child care center staff – The role of the child welfare caseworker and the child protective service process are described to child care and early education services staff in the Child Welfare 101 training. Training on trauma-informed care and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports⁶ (PBIS) was also provided to child care center staff.
 - Early education specialists (who work for various agencies) – These specialists participated in a 5-day train-the-trainer course on PBIS. The

³ The Brazelton Touchpoints program is an evidence-based theory of child development that provides ongoing opportunities for parents and providers to help each other understand children's behaviors, strengths, and growing capacities.

⁴ PRIDE is the training for prospective foster parents.

⁵ The Guiding Stars program is a voluntary quality rating improvement system of child care providers in Duval County (<http://elcofduval.org/gcod.asp>).

⁶ PBIS is a classroom management technique used with children who have behavioral issues.

- specialists provided, and will continue to provide, the training to the child care and early education service providers they oversee.
- Guardians ad litem and court personnel – The training included information on the benefits of quality child care and early education services, developmental delays, and the resources available for children in the community.
 - **FL/FCI** - Developed or contracted for numerous trainings for child care providers, court officers, child welfare staff, foster parents, and caregivers, including:
 - Informed Choice Program – This training is provided to foster parents, caregivers, parents, court officers, child advocates, and child advocate supervisors. It assists foster parents and other stakeholders in evaluating potential child care providers and in making an informed decision in determining the best learning environment for the child. The training also includes an introduction to the child care centers certified by BRIDGES.
 - Early Steps – Mandatory for child advocates and child advocate supervisors, this training provides information on identifying disabilities and delays, where to have children screened for disabilities and delays, and how to follow up to ensure the appropriate resources have been provided to the children.
 - Becoming Trauma-Informed – Provided to child care providers, foster parents, caregivers, child welfare staff, court officers, and biological parents, this is a competency-based course aimed at building the capacity to provide trauma-informed services to children served by child welfare agencies.
 - Social and Emotional Needs of Children – This training is provided to child care providers and includes several workshops, such as trauma-informed care, the effects of trauma on young children, the effectiveness of transdisciplinary staffing in addressing children’s needs, and the needs of children in foster care in the child care setting.
 - In addition, child care providers receive training on the foster care system and how it works, and child advocates are provided with training on the benefits of early learning for young children in foster care.
 - **GA** - Developed and implemented training for child care providers, DFCS staff, and health department personnel. Training topics included:
 - Taming Transition Time
 - Creating Partnerships: Communicating With Parents and Families
 - Child Welfare One-on-One
 - Better Brains for Babies
 - Helping Children Cope with Traumatic Events
 - **RI** - Assessed current workforce knowledge of child welfare, early childhood development concepts, and best practices, and their ability to apply best practices as they work with young children in foster care. Although RI-ECCW did not develop trainings for the project, it did survey child welfare staff, EHS/HS staff, foster parents, and CASA staff to determine training needs and to determine the accessibility of trainings. As a result, RI DCYF and RI HS Association agreed to collaborate to ensure that young children involved in the child welfare system have access to EHS/HS and to offer joint trainings and professional development opportunities.
 - **Public awareness campaigns.** Several projects implemented public awareness campaigns.
 - **AR** - Developed a brochure to increase awareness about the project. The brochure was distributed at various professional conferences throughout the State, to stakeholders, and throughout DCFS and DCCECE offices. CD-ROMs with useful resources were distributed at trainings, conferences, and other events. In addition, the Building Bridges presentations were formatted as videos and distributed to nearly all early childhood community college students enrolled in the 2013 fall semester.

- **CO** - The Butler Institute developed a bulletin to inform the field about PIECES. The bulletin was sent to local Early Childhood Councils and State and local offices of the DCW. In addition, a local site (Fremont) developed a video brochure that contains highlighted information about services in the areas of early childhood education, family support, health, and mental health located in the community. This video plays in the waiting rooms of child welfare offices, the health department, and the early childhood family center.
- **FL/FSSNF** - Developed an early learning program brochure that is provided to foster parents at the time of placement of children under the age of 5 years. Prospective foster parents also receive the brochure during their initial training. The brochure describes the benefits of high-quality child care and early education services, offers information on the qualities to look for in a child care provider, and provides contact information for agencies that have detailed local information available.
- **FL/FCI** - Created and distributed the foster parent school readiness handbook. Prior to the inception of BRIDGES, many foster parents did not know how to apply for child care services for children in their care. The handbook explains the importance of early learning, highlights the benefits of choosing high-quality child care, and provides information on school readiness resources in Broward County, including how to apply. The printed handbook was distributed to all Broward County foster parents with children ages birth to 3 years, as well as to the foster home agencies.
- **RI** - Conducted activities to increase public awareness about EHS/HS, including meeting with statewide stakeholder groups, developing informational materials (e.g., brochures and magnets with EHS/HS locations, the process for enrollment, and foster children being prioritized for eligibility), posting information about EHS/HS on the Foster Forward website, and holding open houses to increase awareness about EHS/HS services.
- **Data systems.** Projects planned, developed, and/or enhanced data systems to assist in enrolling children in early care and education, maintaining children with the same ECE provider, and/or to exchange data between the systems.
 - **CA** - Expanded the electronic DCFS-HS referral system to include LBUSD HS and EHS agencies.
 - **CT** - Modified LINK, the DCF case management system, to automatically identify every child from birth to 5 years of age in an open case for an assessment of the child's educational and developmental needs. Assessment results are added to the case plan.
 - **FL/FCI** - BRIDGES worked with the early childhood and child welfare partners to develop a comprehensive data management system that would capture the data needs of both systems. During the grant period, FL's Office of Early Learning was developing, training for, and expecting to implement a comprehensive, flexible, user-friendly statewide enhanced data system for the early learning community. BRIDGES planned to use that platform to expand opportunities to track children in both the early childhood and the child welfare systems. Unfortunately, the State abandoned its plans to implement the new system. As a result, Family Central worked with Ounce of Prevention to design a local system to align the needs of children in the child welfare and early childhood settings. The system design was not finalized by the time the grant ended.
 - **FL/FSSNF** - (1) Developed an electronic child care subsidy application process that allows caseworkers to track the approval process. (2) Developed a data system to capture the number of children in foster care enrolled in EHS, HS, or other quality child care programs. As a result of this system, the FSSNF Early Education Support Specialist (EESS) can identify the children who have not been enrolled in child care or early education services. If it is determined that a child has not been enrolled in child care, the EESS will contact the caregiver to discuss the requirement

for child care services and provide guidance on child care providers, as needed. (3) Developed a Geographic Information System to map foster parents and all licensed child care providers and private providers that are quality-rated by the ELC. In addition to facilitating efficient matching of children with conveniently located, high-quality child care and early learning services, this may also make it possible for a child to remain in the same child care setting even when the child has to change foster placements.

▪ **Child care provider certification programs.** Several projects implemented provider certification programs.

- **FL/FSSNF** - Established and implemented the CW-EEP Certification program that allows providers to become preferred providers for young children in foster care. The child care directors participate in a 10-hour training course that includes Child Welfare 101, trauma-informed care, and PBIS. The child care director then presents a 2-hour summary training to their child care staff. Providing this specific training is intended to reduce the number of child care disruptions due to behavioral issues exhibited by children in foster care. Giving these providers the tools to work more effectively with children who are involved with child welfare is intended to reduce the likelihood that these children will be expelled for behavior problems. In addition to receiving this training, child care providers are also rated on an environmental and educational scale. FSSNF encourages caregivers to use providers who have been certified by the CW-EEP.
- **FL/FCI** - Developed and implemented a quality child care certification that categorizes child care centers by their level of qualification to meet the unique needs of children in foster care. To achieve certification, providers must complete training on specific strategies to teach children the social and emotional skills they will need to succeed in school. The BRIDGES quality certification system identifies providers by three levels of quality defined as follows:

- Level One – This foundation level requires that a child care center/licensed family child care home be accredited by an early education accreditation agency and/or possess a Quality Counts rating of three, four, or five stars; and have the following:
 - » basic parent involvement
 - » staff trained to understand the foster care system and the unique needs of children in foster care
 - » a commitment to maintain this quality and to exchange information between the center and appropriate child-serving agencies
- Level Two – This certification level builds on level one and requires intensive parent involvement; the implementation of a curriculum to meet the unique needs/goals of individual children; and participation in community collaboration, such as Community for Quality Early Learning and Literacy, in order to develop partnerships. Ideally, centers are implementing an evidence-based social-emotional approach, such as the Positive Behavior Support and Classroom Assessment Scoring System.
- Level Three – This certification level meets the qualifications of levels one and two and focuses on professional development of the staff on trauma/abandonment/attachment, behavioral issues, inclusion, and supervised visits; staff participate in transdisciplinary staffings; and the owners are committed to the process with a focus on building a solid leadership team and diminished staff turnover.

Overarching Themes

- Common Challenges
- Successful Strategies
- Common Lessons Learned

Common Challenges

Grantees identified multiple challenges in their efforts to achieve collaboration between child welfare and early childhood education (ECE) agencies/providers:

- **Information sharing.** Challenges in sharing information about children served by both systems were attributed to State laws preventing child welfare agencies and educational entities from sharing information without the informed consent of the parent, as well as the lack of interaction between child welfare staff and ECE providers. Projects worked to overcome this barrier through relationship building, training, establishing information-sharing protocols and memoranda of understanding, obtaining parental consent through release forms, and court orders allowing child welfare agencies to have education information about children in their custody.
- **Developing and maintaining advisory and leadership committees.** Most projects established leadership committees. One of the challenges in developing these committees was obtaining sustained participation from leadership personnel from collaborative partners who had sufficient decision-making authority. Issues that hindered the participation of some key personnel included the inability to commit to meetings and activities due to their already demanding schedules. In addition, some projects reported a challenge with having a balance of leadership from collaborative partners and frontline staff from the same partner agencies. The belief was that both were needed – the leaders to approve and commit to agency change and frontline staff to determine if the change/activity was “doable.”
- **Availability of high-quality ECE programs.** In many of the project areas, there were limited ECE spaces to serve children supervised by the child welfare system. Enrollments for high-quality ECE centers, including EHS/HS, are conducted annually. ECE centers have enrollments from spring to late summer and EHS/HS generally enroll in spring for the following fall term, which results in programs reaching full capacity before they even begin. Children enter foster care all times year round and are generally in need of ECE placements without advanced notice. In addition, in some neighborhoods in the project areas there were no high-quality ECE programs or EHS/HS programs, which made participation in an ECE program difficult for children and their caregivers.
- **Evaluation.** The Funding Opportunity Announcement required each project to conduct an evaluation documenting the processes and outcomes of their collaborations. Several evaluations experienced data collection issues, which limited the ability to complete the evaluation process as it was designed. In a few projects, baseline data were not available because the data were not being collected prior to the implementation of the grant project. In addition, in some projects, the data systems of the child welfare agency and/or ECE agency did not or could not collect the desired data.

Successful Strategies

The following strategies were identified by projects as influential in enhancing the collaborative process:

- **Communication and interaction across programs:** The grant projects brought together programs that previously had little to no interaction, despite serving the same children and families. Strong partnerships of the agencies and the individuals were formed. The partners met on a regular basis to discuss the progress in meeting the objectives of the grant projects and to modify the project if needed. In addition, the agencies met to discuss policies and procedures, which was beneficial in addressing the barriers to service provision.

- **Supportive leadership:** Having people on the leadership team who could make decisions on behalf of their agency/organization, or who had access to the decision-makers, was key to the success of the projects. In addition, the leaders of the partner agencies were very supportive of the project and understood the benefits of ECE for children involved with the child welfare system. The diversity of the leadership teams contributed significantly to the success of the projects, as well as to the development of project resources, including trainings. The cross-discipline leadership team allowed for members to learn from one another's expertise.
- **Ongoing education:** Training child welfare staff on the importance of ECE in improving educational outcomes, especially for children involved with child welfare, was key to increasing referrals and enrollment. Training child care providers and workers about trauma and the unique care needed by children involved with the child welfare system was beneficial in maintaining children in a child care setting and ensuring their unique needs were met.
- **Child welfare system involvement:** Those projects in which the child welfare agency was actively engaged and invested in the project saw the most success in the number of referrals and enrollments of young children into ECE and high-quality child care.
- **Lack of knowledge.** Child welfare staff, foster parents, caregivers, parents, and other relevant stakeholders need to be educated on the benefits of children attending quality ECE programs. In addition, child welfare staff and caregivers should be provided information on a regular basis on how to recognize high-quality ECE programs and how to enroll children in these programs, including notices of annual enrollment in EHS/HS programs. In addition, ECE providers/workers need to be educated on recognizing and managing the effects of trauma in the ECE setting.

Evaluation

- Evaluation Challenges
- Evaluation Findings

The Funding Opportunity Announcement required each grantee to engage in an evaluation. The goal was to track relevant outputs and outcomes that reflect the results of the project activities. Where data were available and appropriate, grantees were encouraged to measure outcomes pre- and post- of grant activities. Each project worked with an evaluator to construct a logic model, develop a design for the evaluation, and collect and analyze data. The evaluation summaries in the Appendix describe each project's data collection tools and methods, evaluation challenges, and selected process and outcome findings as described in project reports.

Evaluation Challenges

The Child Welfare - Early Education Partnerships projects experienced some evaluation challenges, which for a few had a negative impact on the rigor of their evaluations. Several projects reported the intent to collect certain types of data from early childhood education (ECE) or child welfare agencies, including baseline data, child-specific data, and ECE referral and/or enrollment data. However, while conducting the evaluation, it was determined that some of these data were not available due to limited data infrastructures at the ECE or child welfare agencies, and/or incomplete data collection prior to the grant period. In addition, some projects reported difficulty in obtaining information/feedback from stakeholders, collaborative partners, and training

Common Lessons Learned

The projects developed infrastructure and implemented interagency practices to promote ECE and child welfare collaboration through varied approaches. These project implementation and evaluation experiences highlighted some lessons learned, including the following:

- **Leadership commitment is essential.** The leadership of each agency involved being supportive of the project and understanding the benefits of ECE for children involved with the child welfare system was a key to the success of the projects.
- **Relationship building.** Cross-training and revised policies that mandate regular contact between child welfare and ECE providers/workers promote relationship building among child welfare and ECE staff.

participants. In most cases, this only delayed the evaluation process, but in other cases, this may have resulted in the lack of a meaningful sample size.

Evaluation Findings

Programs reported some promising findings related to enhanced Child Welfare - Early Education coordination and collaboration; however, it is difficult to summarize results across the projects due to the differences in the activities of the projects, the differences in the evaluation processes, and the varying level of participation among key agencies. In addition, because of the evaluation challenges and resultant limitations, caution must be used in drawing inferences or making generalizations from these findings.

Overall, the project evaluations appear to suggest improvements in coordination between child welfare and ECE systems and benefits for children receiving ECE services. Most of the project evaluations indicated that collaboration between child welfare and ECE agencies improved as a result of the project. In many projects, policies and procedures streamlining the referral process were developed and implemented, and guidelines and protocols to open communication between the two systems were established. In addition, most projects that tracked referrals and enrollments of young children to ECE programs reported an increase in referrals and enrollments following implementation of the grant. While collaboration improved in most projects, a few projects indicated that the projects were not able to make a significant impact in systemic barriers that inhibit young children's enrollment in ECE programs, including the limited availability of high-quality child care in some areas.

The results of pre- and posttests indicate that most training attendees increased their level of knowledge about the training topics, including knowledge about the unique needs of young children who have experienced trauma and are involved with the child welfare system, how the child welfare system works, the benefits of quality ECE, and the Strengthening Families framework. Most training participants reported that they were satisfied with the training they received through the projects.

APPENDIX: Evaluation Summaries

The evaluation summaries below provide a brief overview of each project's data collection tools and methods, evaluation challenges, and selected process and outcome findings as described in project reports.

Project: Arkansas

Evaluator: Tara V. DeJohn, Ph.D., L.C.S.W.

Data Collections Sources/Tools:

- Shared expertise of Leadership Team members
- Interviews of stakeholders from both systems, court personnel, and community stakeholders
- Broad group general surveys⁷
- Constant comparison analysis was used to review the departmental policies
- Thematic analyses were used for the stakeholder interviews and training posttest comments. Descriptive statistics were used to determine training evaluation participants' collective characteristics (e.g., agency affiliation, demographics) and for the analyses of the broad survey data.
- Correlations and chi-squares, and paired t-tests were used as closed-ended items on the pre- and posttest questionnaires.
- Composite scores were created to analyze changes from pre- to post- items.
- SPSS software was used to manage and analyze the quantitative data.

Evaluation Challenges:

- Scheduling stakeholder interviews with staff from around the State was difficult due to proximity, work load, and work schedules.

⁷ The project administered surveys to child welfare workers and ECE staff to determine the general knowledge and attitudes about child welfare and early childhood education, the understanding of the impact of trauma on young children, and the characteristics of high-quality early child care, and to assess if there was a need for increased training related to these topics.

- Scheduling follow-up interviews with training participants was a challenge due to personnel changes and training scheduling.
- Collecting child-specific level data was difficult due to information infrastructures in DCFS and DCCECE.

Evaluation Findings:

- DCFS and DCCECE systems increased their collaboration and enhanced their working relationship with each other; however, a mechanism to regularly review policies through the lens of cross-system collaboration and impact does not exist.
- The desire for equitable policies that are congruent across systems and provide mechanisms for consumer improvement was readily evident while implementing this project; however, both agencies are encumbered by ongoing policies and regulations imposed on them through legislation.
- Training attendees increased in their level of the knowledge about the unique needs of young children who have experienced trauma and are involved with the child welfare system; and about the benefits of quality early child care education.
- Posttraining questionnaires indicated participants found the trainings very important and helpful, and the open-ended comments on posttest surveys indicated participants planned to utilize information from the trainings in their actions and decisions in their job settings.
- At the systems level, it was discovered that clear tracking and decision-making of child care/early education placements for young children involved in child welfare is not uniformly performed or delineated. There were mixed perceptions about who has the primary decision-making power for placement across respondents interviewed. The majority of DCFS workforce reported foster parents as the primary decision-makers.
- Cross-system communications and boundaries of confidentiality were seen as additional factors complicating the placement processes.

Project: California

Evaluator: Sacha Klein, Ph.D., Michigan State University, School of Social Work, and Sei Young Lee, Ph.D., UCLA Inter-University Consortium

Data Collections Sources/Tools:

- The process study
 - Direct observation
 - Document review
 - Software demonstration⁸
 - Key informant interviews
- The outcome study used a mixed methods approach that primarily relied on quantitative methods, but augmented this approach with some qualitative methods
 - Surveyed Advisory Committee members about the strength and types of collaboration occurring between their organizations both at the initial convening of the Advisory Committee meeting and again 1 year later
 - Social network analysis to measure whether the presence and strength of organizational ties (collaboration) increased over the course of the project
 - Administered pre- and posttests to participants of the LACWEEP trainings
 - Collected qualitative feedback from training participants about their suggestions for improving training
 - Collected monthly data on the number of ECE referrals and enrollments for the target population
 - Collected data on the characteristics of children in the target population who were and were not referred for ECE services, and, when applicable, the reasons given for not making ECE referrals and for children not being successfully enrolled in ECE. Used descriptive statistics to relate these findings.

⁸ The evaluation team was provided a demonstration of the expanded referral process from the perspective of a DCFS caseworker trying to refer a child living in Long Beach for ECE services, and a demonstration of the “batching” procedure used to aggregate and transmit referrals to LBUSD’s Office of Head Start

- Conducted a series of 10 focus groups with child welfare, ECE staff, and parents and caregivers to gather information about their experiences with the referral and service linkage system and their perceptions of the benefits and challenges associated with accessing and providing ECE services to children in the child welfare system

Evaluation Challenges:

- The baseline data available for comparison purposes were limited to 3- and 4-year olds, as the DCFS Head Start Referral System did not include infants and toddlers prior to the grant.
- The baseline data were restricted to referrals only, as actual ECE enrollment was not tracked prior to the grant.

Evaluation Findings:

- Convened the LACWEEP Advisory Committee
- Developed the Information-Sharing Protocol, Data Infrastructure Development Plan, and the Strategic (a.k.a. Sustainability) Plan
- Expanded the referral system to capture data on infants and toddlers (in addition to 3- and 4-year-olds); however, LACWEEP has not succeeded in fully automating DCFS' electronic Head Start/ECE referral system, as originally proposed
- Developed a data tracking system for children referred by DCFS that documents the date the ECE referral was received, the date an ECE program application was completed, the availability of LBUSD Head Start programs, length of time involved in enrolling a child in an ECE program, the type of ECE program a child is enrolled in, and, when applicable, reason for service refusal
- Conducted 12 joint Child Welfare-ECE Provider trainings that were attended by a total of 243 people, including 124 DCFS and 119 ECE staff
- The participants in the joint Child Welfare-ECE Provider trainings experienced the greatest improvement in their mastery of training content related to the benefits of ECE, followed by mastery of

addressing barriers to accessing ECE, and mastery in navigating ECE (Learning Objective 1).

- Both child welfare and ECE trainees expressed their value for the joint breakout sessions during which equal numbers of child welfare and ECE staff engaged in small group discussions about the challenges and special considerations associated with meeting the ECE needs of children who are part of the child welfare system.
- Respondents from both groups commented on the benefit of improving communication across agencies (child welfare and LBUSD) as well as across community agencies
- Conducted 7 trainings for parents and caregivers of young children involved in the child welfare system, attended by 61 parents/caregivers, including 19 peer support specialists for DCFS-supervised families from the Parents in Partnership program, 13 birth parents, 10 relative caregivers/non-relative extended family members, and 14 other substitute caregivers (e.g., foster parents, adoptive parents, legal guardians)
- Provided training to 21 Court Appointed Special Advocates
- Presented an abbreviated version of the LACWEEP training at the Juvenile Dependency Court "Judges Lunch" to 16 participants, including 10 judges, 4 commissioners, 1 referee, and 1 research attorney
- After completing the LACWEEP trainings, the participants generally reported the largest gains in their ability to navigate ECE services, followed by gains in their understanding of barriers to accessing ECE for children in the child welfare system, and lastly, their increased familiarity with the benefits of high-quality ECE for child welfare-supervised infants and young children.

Additional CA findings include:

- The LACWEEP Advisory Committee has enhanced collaboration and service coordination among participating agencies seeking to meet the ECE needs of families with young children involved in the child welfare system. In Long Beach, the density of networks

for sending and receiving referrals roughly doubled in strength during the Advisory Committee's first year.

- The network centralization findings suggest that information sharing among member agencies became more decentralized during the first year of the Advisory Committee.
- The network of Advisory Committee members actually became slightly more centralized with respect to all other facets of collaboration that were measured. These findings strongly suggest that collaborative task forces (like the LACWEEP Advisory Committee) organized around improving access to ECE services for children in the child welfare system, are a viable means of improving service coordination and strengthening organizational partnerships to promote this shared goal.
- Seven of the eight respondents strongly agreed that their organization had benefited from being involved in the Advisory Committee, while the remaining respondent slightly agreed with this statement.
- When specifically asked whether their participation on the Advisory Committee had strengthened their organization's commitment to ECE for children involved with the child welfare system, seven of the eight respondents strongly agreed while one respondent slightly agreed.
- Survey results support the conclusion that the Advisory Committee structure was an effective way to improve service coordination and inter-organizational collaboration to increase ECE access for children in the child welfare system.
- The Advisory Committee members seemed to particularly benefit from the cross-sector structure of the Committee and the resulting opportunities to build relationships with non-traditional partners, e.g., agencies with different organizational mandates than their own.
- Based on the available data, there was a clear increase in the number of children in the target population who were referred for ECE services following implementation of the grant.

- There was a particularly marked increase in the number of children ages birth through 2 who were referred following implementation of the grant.
- Of the 315 target children referred via DCFS's electronic referral during the grant, 135 children were successfully enrolled in an ECE program (n=89), waitlisted for a LBUSD Head Start or Early Head Start program (n=25), or determined to already be enrolled in an ECE program (n=21). An additional 82 children were referred to LBUSD Head Start during the final month of the grant, but at the time of the final report, the disposition of these children had not been determined.

Project: Colorado

Evaluator: The Butler Institute

Data collection sources/tools:

- A statewide assessment was conducted in 2012 to understand the landscape of CW-EC collaboration across the state. The assessment involved online surveys completed by child welfare, Head Start, Early Head Start, Early Intervention, and Early Childhood Council Directors. The results are available on the Butler Institute website at <http://www.thebutlerinstitute.org/projects/pieces/>.
- Workgroup collaboration and activity surveys were administered to PIECES project teams in El Paso, Fremont, and Jefferson counties in 2011 and 2013 as a way to measure the extent of collaboration and types of collaboration occurring over time among project partners. The following measures were used to assess collaboration at the work team level:
 - Wilder Collaborative Factors Inventory
 - Social Network Instrument
 - Early Childhood Child Welfare (ECCW) Contact form
- Strengthening Families training evaluations were conducted among a select number of trainings in PIECES communities. The Center for the Study of Social Policy's pre- and post-tests for Strengthening Families trainings were used to assess the level of competence in the Strengthening Families framework.

- Qualitative interviews were conducted with key project team members at the conclusion of the 2011–2013 PIECES initiative.

Evaluation Challenges:

- None of the counties were able to cohesively track referrals and receipt of child care services among children involved with child welfare services.
- Administrative data systems were ill-equipped to track children referred to early intervention and Head Start, and hand-tallied records had to be used in some instances.

Evaluation Findings:

- Work team members saw their collaborative as beneficial, stating that the group fulfills a unique function in their community, is relevant to their own job role or function of their agency, and is establishing a history for this type of work in the community.
- Work team members felt that leadership was strong and that the group was flexible.
- Work teams experienced greater challenges in the functional aspects of collaboration, such as having adequate communication, appropriate cross-section of members, sufficient resources, and clear roles.
- Meeting discussions centered on systems integration issues, primarily identifying and sharing resources, but also communication, financial, and clarifying roles.
- Work teams spent less time discussing clients, e.g., policies and procedures concerned with program enrollment or needs relative to the population. This may reflect that the compositions of the work teams were mainly senior leadership and, had membership been different, practice or client flow topics would be more central.
- Work teams paid less attention to internal organization capacity (i.e., a single agency) compared with external capacity, such as sharing resources, which reflects the cross-agency mission of the work and purpose of the collaboratives.

- Work teams discussed these specific grant objectives the least: early intervention services, child care quality, dissemination efforts, program evaluation, and utilizing technical assistance.
- In El Paso and Jefferson counties, 306 trainees completed a pre- and post- assessment of knowledge gained through the training.
 - Pre-test results reveal a fairly high level of knowledge among participants before the training (74 percent correct responses).
 - Post-test results indicate that knowledge did increase over the course of the training (80 percent correct responses).
- In Fremont County, the results of the Strengthening Families pre- and post-test data suggested that both the Department of Human Services (DHS) and Early Childhood Health Outreach (ECHO) groups showed increased knowledge following their respective online training experiences.
- Two of the three PIECES communities were able to track children’s receipt of early childhood services and developmental screenings since the onset of the initiative.
 - El Paso County: Of the 271 children screened, 71 percent were linked with early childhood services as a result of screening, including Head Start enrollment (32 percent), the Colorado Preschool Program (8 percent), and Early Intervention assessment (31 percent).
 - Fremont County: Approximately 52 children were referred by DHS to ECHO during a 6-month timeframe after the PIECES changes were made to the data system and referral protocol (e.g., new forms) compared to the 12 to 15 children identified under the old system.

Project: Connecticut

Evaluator: Walter Gilliam, Ph.D., Yale University

Data Collections Sources/Tools:

- Evaluation design was primarily pre-/post-test design without any group comparison
- Both quantitative and qualitative data collection strategies were used

Evaluation Challenges:

- The short time for obtaining Institutional Review Board review and approval for the child/family survey component
- The evaluation design may have been overly ambitious for the short duration of this grant.
- The very short time of the grant overall made data collection difficult.
- The lack of coordination and follow-up at DCF created challenges in obtaining sufficient data to draw meaningful conclusions.
- The evaluation of training was focused only on knowledge acquisition with measures developed by trainers and not tested for psychometric properties.
- The practice change measures were developed and circulated too late to analyze for the final report.
- The significant changes in leadership throughout the grant period in one region had a negative impact, particularly with respect to disseminating and collecting post-test survey results. Despite numerous efforts, a meaningful sample could not be obtained.
- The foster parents not submitting survey information despite social workers' efforts, was a significant challenge.

Evaluation Findings:

Note: The project reported that it was unable to interpret findings for some aspects of the program due to limited returns of posttests and surveys.

- Qualitative data from quarterly meetings illustrate the expanded number and representation of partners at the table and the numerous activities they now engage in for both system alignment and service coordination.
 - For the 4 quarters immediately preceding the grant period, an average of 95 core partners attended quarterly meetings compared to an average of 105 core participants over the final 4 quarters of the grant.
- The data show increased community representation of membership and involvement in ongoing local partnership activities in system/planning coordination and collaborative service delivery.
 - The agencies participating in local collaboratives created, updated, and/or expanded Memoranda of Understanding between the agencies.
 - The referral forms and processes were streamlined among local early childhood-child welfare partners.
- The training activities significantly increased knowledge and created and strengthened partnerships among community agencies and providers.
 - The Strengthening Families training fostered the use of a common framework—the Protective Factors Framework—for connecting services and supporting families.
 - The Strengthening Families training appeared to be of use to participants regardless of whether they had previously been exposed to the Strengthening Families framework.
 - The Infant Mental Health reflective supervision and training series fostered a common understanding of infant trauma and parent-infant relationships, creating a unified approach for assessing family needs and supporting their recovery.
 - Pre- and post-test results evidence the increase in knowledge and anecdotal reports shared at numerous venues evidence the changes that resulted in practice for both child welfare and early childhood staff.

- The out-posting of DCF staff is now occurring at most Head Start programs, and in the target community of Hartford, there is a Head Start staff person out-posted to the DCF office.
- The first phase of the DCF data collection system that allows for tracking enrollment in early care and education programs was completed.

Project: Florida - Family Support Services of North Florida

Evaluator: Dr. Mary Armstrong, Ph.D.

Data Collections Sources/Tools:

- Process Evaluation
 - Document review
 - Observations
 - Web-based partner survey at baseline and at 15 months
- Implementation Analysis: Implementation of CW-EEP was assessed using methods from implementation science that evaluate the capacity of the service infrastructure to support effective implementation
 - Assessment of the implementation strategies and activities for CWEEP at the program level including fidelity to the CWEEP principles and values
 - Web-based partner surveys
 - Practitioner interviews
 - Document review
- Outcomes Study
 - Comparison of enrollment numbers and proportion at baseline vs. Month 12
 - Count of the number of EHS, HS, and child care program staff and classrooms that receive training and consultation

Evaluation Challenges:

The project did not identify any challenges with the evaluation process.

Evaluation Findings:

- At both data collection points (baseline and 15 months), there was strong agreement among members of the Oversight Committee on the primary goal to improve access to and the quality of early education for children under the age of 5 in the child welfare system in Duval and Nassau counties.
 - Consensus about CW-EEP’s mission and goals was also evident during the Oversight Committee’s monthly meetings.
 - Consensus about CW-EEP’s mission and goals is also reflected by the signing of its Interagency Agreement by all partners by the end of the project.
- At the second data collection point, there was agreement that key stakeholders were at the table.
 - Some participants noted that there was limited involvement from “hands on” staff, including case managers, foster parents, relative caregivers, and child care staff.
- Findings from the 1-year follow-up survey assessment indicated that considerable progress was made in establishing collaborative processes among the CW-EEP partner agencies.
- At the second data collection point, supportive environmental factors that were identified by survey participants included the partnership developed within the CW-EEP Oversight Committee.
- At the second data collection point, two challenges were noted:
 - The unrealistic expectations about quality because child care staff are undereducated and underpaid
 - When children are returned home from foster care and the child care stipend ends, there is a need to find resources to bridge the funding gap
- At the second data collection point, there was an acknowledgement that the training needs identified early in the grant had been recognized and acted upon, and that many successful training events had occurred with the appropriate groups through the CW-EEP project.

- At the 15-month data collection point, numerous changes in policies, procedures, and practice were identified by participants, including the following:
 - Streamlined referral process for quality child care for children in child welfare, including implementation of the automated child care referral form and the automated School Readiness Voucher Application
 - Obtained universal consent for each child at the time of foster care admission so that referrals could be made to Early Steps, which enabled timely developmental assessments to be completed
 - Implemented procedure that all children receive the ASQ and the ASQ-SE developmental screenings at admission and, as needed, appropriate referrals were made for developmental services and infant mental health services
 - Revised PRIDE training for prospective foster parents
 - Required that foster parents identify at least three high-quality child care settings before they are licensed
 - Enhanced trainings for child care staff was implemented, including PBIS and the importance of trauma in young children
 - Developed the CW-EEP Certification process for child care centers.
 - Provided training on choosing high-quality child care settings to guardians ad litem, child protective investigators, and case management organization⁹ case managers
- Data indicated that CW-EEP has been successful in its primary goal of increasing the number and proportion of children in foster care who are enrolled in quality child care settings.
 - There was a 52 percent increase in the number of children enrolled in quality child care programs
 - There was a 54 percent decrease in the number of children enrolled in child care settings that were not rated as quality centers by the Early Learning Coalition’s Star Rating System
 - There was a 75 percent reduction in the number of foster children who are not enrolled in child care
- Data indicated that 102 child care employees with direct contact with children in out-of-home care have received training on evidence-informed practices, including trauma-informed care and PBIS.

Project: Florida - Family Central Inc.

Evaluator: Dr. Mary Ann Falconer, Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida

Data Collections Sources/Tools:

The evaluation of BRIDGES was divided into three phases. Each phase included a set of activities designed to be formative and provide key information for moving the BRIDGES initiative forward.

- Phase 1: Get familiar with the BRIDGES infrastructure, meet members of the BRIDGES collaboration, and gather input from those who were active in the early deliberations. Ongoing monitoring of the BRIDGES activities continued through all phases and extensions of the grant and included monitoring Steering/ Governance Committee meetings and subcommittee meetings.
- Phase 2: Multiple data collection methods were implemented, including an online survey with members of the BRIDGES collaboration and semi-structured interviews with BRIDGES members, foster parents, and child care providers.
- Phase 3: Included a second wave of data collection using the online survey of BRIDGES collaboration members, which allowed for a comparison of data collected during phase 1. In addition, telephone interviews with those who attended transdisciplinary staffings were conducted. The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory was selected for the BRIDGES initiative for administration at 7 and 15 months with all collaboration members (steering committee and subcommittee members) and other stakeholders identified by the evaluation team and the grantee core staff.

⁹ Case management organization (CMO): A CMO contracts with the community-based care agency to provide frontline services to children and families under state supervision.

Evaluation Challenges:

- The changes in membership of the subcommittees during Phase I had an impact on the value of the calculation of the attendance percentages.
- The receipt of information shared or reviewed during activities (i.e., training demonstrations, meetings between members of the collaborative separate from the steering committee and subcommittees, and attending orientations for a statewide early learning information system) was not always complete.
- The first round of data collection required coordination with BRIDGES contacts, particularly for the selection and scheduling of interviews with foster parents. While these interviews were considered essential evaluation activities, there were challenges encountered at the local site. About half of the planned interviews with foster parents were not conducted face-to-face due to changes in families' schedules; therefore, the remaining interviews were conducted by telephone.
- The transdisciplinary staffings were difficult to monitor because there were meetings and conference calls scheduled for this objective, but the participation of evaluators was not secured. While this challenge was believed to be an oversight and unintended, evaluators continued to request notification and participation in these meetings.
- The efforts to monitor the activities of the BRIDGES initiative were impeded with a change in the project coordinator.
- The requests for additional information and feedback were submitted periodically to BRIDGES collaboration members, but feedback was not always timely or adequate.

Evaluation Findings:

- The results of the online survey indicated that 88 percent of the respondents were satisfied ("very satisfied" or "satisfied"), and 63 percent were "very satisfied" with the coordination and monitoring by the BRIDGES Steering/Governance Committee.

- The responses in interviews with collaboration members indicated satisfaction with several aspects of the governance structure, including the opinion that there was plenty of opportunity to provide input.
- The results of the online survey indicated that respondents were most satisfied with the progress made toward meeting the training objectives, and least satisfied with establishing the data-sharing mechanism objective and with the transdisciplinary staffings.
- The BRIDGES Informed Choice Training was delivered in two phases, pilot (three trainings) and non-pilot (one training).
 - A total of 63 people attended the four trainings, including foster parents, FCI support services staff, childcare providers, and Early Care and Education Staff
 - Performance on the pre- and posttests was dependent on the role of the participant
- The scores on the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory indicated a high level of success for the BRIDGES collaboration.
- Based on the documentation available, eight child care centers completed the BRIDGES Certification Application; however, only seven child care providers completed the required training and other requirements for BRIDGES certification.
- A total of six transdisciplinary staffings took place during the grant period.
 - The interviews with transdisciplinary staffing participants indicated that all of the staffing participants thought that the staffings were beneficial for the children

Project: GEORGIA

Evaluator: Dr. Valerie Hutcherson

Data Collections Sources/Tools:

- Process data were collected to describe project implementation and provide a detailed description of participants

- Meeting notes were maintained to track partner participation and describe the collaboration process, and demographic information on case management participants was collected
 - Information on training participants was tracked
 - Early childhood program referrals and enrollment, living arrangement, and changes in DFCS case status were tracked
 - The Provan Collaboration Network survey was administered at the beginning and end of the project to track changes in the collaborative relationship between partners.
 - A training evaluation survey was administered at the end of all multiagency training sessions to assess participant satisfaction and the extent to which participants felt that they had increased their knowledge and acquired new skills that could be used in their jobs.
 - Several instruments were used to make decisions about appropriate referrals, including the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, the Dunst Family Needs Scale, and the Parenting Stress Index
 - Descriptive statistics were used to describe the target group and implementation process
 - Multivariate statistical techniques were used to analyze the survey data
- Evaluation Challenges:
- The project did not identify any challenges with the evaluation process.
- Evaluation Findings:
- Fourteen organizations were involved in the collaborative partnership and were invited to attend monthly meetings.
 - Partner agencies met on a monthly basis to discuss project implementation, including barriers and challenges, training opportunities, and sharing resources.
- The results from the data collection at 18 months indicated an increase in the percentage of partnering agencies that reported sharing information with each other, as well as an increase in sending and receiving referrals among agencies.
 - Data from the Dunst Family Needs Scale show that the most common needs identified by families were child care; financial security; resources, including funds to pay for special needs; and having money to buy clothes and for recreation and enrichment activities.
 - Multiagency training was implemented during the grant period and a total of five trainings occurred:
 - Participants were satisfied with the training they received.
 - Participants felt that the content was relevant to their job responsibilities.
 - Participants believed they had increased their knowledge on the topic being presented and were confident that they would use the information shared to better serve their populations.
 - Over the 18 months of the project, 49 children participated in the project.
 - Eight children were referred to and enrolled in Head start
 - Four children were referred to and enrolled in other early childhood education programs
 - All children referred to the project were screened using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire.
 - Results for 27 of 49 children were available
 - 48 percent of the 27 children were on target developmentally during the initial screening
 - 26 percent of the 27 children needed additional testing
 - 26 percent of the 27 children were referred to Children’s First for services
 - The Parenting Stress Index was administered to parents/caregivers enrolled in the program.
 - 67.9 percent of the respondents showed normal stress levels
 - 32.1 percent of the respondents showed high stress levels, and referrals to services were provided

Project: Rhode Island

Evaluator: Rebecca Silver

Data Collections Sources/Tools:

- Document review, including, meeting minutes, surveys, reports, and the contact report form
- Qualitative interviews with key stakeholders conducted at the beginning and end of the project—a semi-structured interview format was utilized.
- Reach¹⁰ was assessed to determine whether the systems-building activities touched intended individuals (e.g., children in foster care, staff)
- Information was gathered for all project-sponsored activities
- Records from EHS and HS were gathered to assess the enrollment of foster children
- Records from DCYF were gathered to assess the overall number of children in the foster care system and children with child care placements
- Organizational and system assessment
 - Uses a combination of standardized questionnaires and qualitative interviews to assess relevant organizational constructs such as material resources, infrastructure, service system priorities, organizational leadership, staff training, and staff competencies
 - Key stakeholders identified for the qualitative interviews were asked to complete the organizational and system assessment tool two times during the grant period

Evaluation Challenges:

- The original definitions of reach regarding foster children enrolled in and attending EHS/HS were modified given the inconsistencies in and complexities of the data management systems within the EHS/HS and DCYF systems.

¹⁰ Reach was defined as the number, proportion, and representativeness of individuals who participate in a given activity.

- The program evaluation planners originally intended to collect data from EHS/HS and DCYF that would allow for a monthly description of the number and percent of foster children enrolled in EHS/HS, attendance in EHS/HS, and stability of EHS/HS placement directly prior and throughout the grant period. However, when evaluating feasibility, it was revealed that some of this data were not available due to antiquated, nonexistent, or incomplete data systems at EHS/HS sites and at DCYF. As a result, goals in this area were modified and data were successfully obtained from EHS/HS and DCYF so as to report the number and percentage of foster children enrolled in EHS/HS statewide on a yearly basis.
- There were several measures that included Likert scales or other more quantitative assessments of key constructs (e.g., collaboration on the Contact Report Form and the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory) that could not be analyzed with quantitative methods due to restricted range and/or small sample size. Thus, analysis of these measures was solely qualitative in nature.¹¹
- The sampling of key stakeholders for individual interviews was intentional but ultimately resulted in a convenience sample. Sampling ensured that each stakeholder group, HS staff, DCYF staff, foster parents, State-level stakeholders, was represented, but not all contacted individuals responded and set up interviews. Also, individuals were identified by members of the RI-ECCW Team and the DCYF liaison, which may have biased the sample (e.g., DCYF liaison identified “star” employees).
- There were challenges obtaining interviews from foster parents during the POST wave of key stakeholder interviews.

¹¹ The RI grantee’s final report notes that the small sample size was not due to inaccessibility or lack of participation by key stakeholders. Instead, the nature of the core collaborative evolved over the course of the project resulting in a small core collaborative involved in the day-to-day work of the project, and only these individuals were asked to complete relevant measures.

Evaluation Findings:

- The project was most successful in increasing visibility regarding the special needs of the youngest foster children, reinforcing awareness about the benefits of EHS/HS, and disseminating practical information about EHS/HS to stakeholders.
- The project accomplished all activities listed in the grant proposal and logic model.
 - Met with key stakeholder groups to disseminate information
 - Identified barriers to EHS/HS enrollment among foster children
 - Completed a workforce competency survey
 - Held open houses to promote EHS/HS enrollment for foster children
 - Created and disseminated brochures about EHS/HS
 - Developed MOUs between key organizations
 - Collaborated on a tremendously successful dissemination event
- The reach of many project activities (e.g., open houses) was small and they were not widely attended by target audiences (e.g., DCYF front line staff), thereby reducing the overall impact.
- The project had limited success in engaging a broad base of stakeholders in collaborative planning and in making system changes that benefit the youngest foster children.
 - The project did not make significant impact on the systemic barriers that hinder enrollment and engagement of foster children in EHS/HS (e.g., limited slots, waiting lists, scheduling barriers, complicated enrollment process, and guardianship issues).
- There were indicators of increased collaboration among some key people, organizations, and initiatives; however, others remained underrepresented and unengaged in the project, including DCY, which was one critical partner with limited engagement in the initiative.
 - Less than half of the key stakeholders perceived that there had been increased collaboration (i.e., between EHS/HS and DCYF, between the broader systems of early childhood and child welfare) in the past year.
- Trainings in early childhood development, special needs of foster children, attachment, and trauma were available and/or mandated by the agency (e.g., EHS/HS, DCYF, foster parent licensing), but systemic issues resulted in limited participation.
 - Some EHS/HS centers have many trainings available each year, but teachers attend one set of trainings and mental health staff members attend a different set
 - DCYF officially mandates training hours each year, but content is not mandated, tracking of adherence is inconsistent, and workloads interfere with attendance
 - Foster parents and family service unit workers were provided training in each area when first licensed or first hired, but had not attended trainings since that time
 - Training can be informative and helpful, but was not shown to translate into practice change and/or to be adequate workforce preparation without additional support
- Less than 30 percent of key stakeholders perceived changes in regards to training and professional development of the workforce.
- RI DCYF and RI HS Association agreed to collaborate to ensure that young children involved in the child welfare system have access to EHS/HS and to offer joint trainings and professional development opportunities.

Attachments:

Assessment and Evaluation Results

- CA: Final Focus Group Evaluation
- CO: Collaborative Team Reports October 2012
- CO: PIECES Needs Assessment Report
- CO: Fremont Final Report
- CO. Jefferson Final Report
- CO: El Paso Final Report

Certification Process

- FL/FCI: BRIDGES certification application
- FL/FCI: BRIDGES certification standards checklist
- FL/FCI: BRIDGES certification termination process
- FL/FCI: BRIDGES certification pyramid
- FL/FSSNF: CWEEP Certification Training Requirements

Child Care Selection

- FL/FSSNF: Quality Checklist for Caregivers
- FL/FSSNF: Early Learning Brochure
- FL/FCI: BRIDGES Early Steps journey handout
- FL/FCI: BRIDGES Foster Parent Handbook
- FL/FCI: BRIDGES Foster Parent School Readiness handout

Data Collection Protocols

- CA: Data Tracking Elements
- CA: Focus Group Protocol

Project information/Public Relations

- CO: PIECES Bulletin Issue 1
- CO: PIECES Bulletin Issue 2

Stakeholder and Provider Survey Forms

- AR: Early Childhood Provider Surveys
- AR: Post-Training Evaluation Survey form
- AR: Pre-Training Evaluation Survey form
- CA: Advisory Committee Participant Feedback Survey Meeting 1
- CA: Advisory Committee Participant Feedback Survey Meeting 2
- CA: Advisory Committee Participant Feedback Survey Meeting 3
- CA: Social Network Survey
- CA: Training Pre-Post Survey DCFS
- CA: Training Pre-Post Survey ECE Providers

Training

- AR: Court Officers training
- AR: Early Childhood Provider training
- AR: Child Welfare Family Service Worker training
- AR: Smooth Transitions training
- CA: DCFS and ECE training
- CT: Strengthening Families trainer's guide
- FL/FCI: Informed Choices training PowerPoint
- FL/FSSNF: The Essential Elements of Trauma training
- FL/FSSNF: Child Welfare Training 101



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