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SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Evaluation Study of the Centralized Eligibility List (CEL) Pilot Project

Interim Report

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I. INTRODUCTION

SPR is pleased to present the Interim Report for the Evaluation of the Centralized Eligibility List (CEL) Pilot Project. The report's overarching purpose is to analyze how the nine pilot counties have begun to implement their CELs, both organizationally and technologically. As part of this overarching analysis, we examine: key variations in pilot counties' local context and CEL design; implementation challenges and lessons learned; preliminary findings on CEL family characteristics; and the long-term potential of CELs as a child care data source and a tool for improving service delivery.

BACKGROUND

Gaining access to affordable child care has long proven to be a difficult task for a large number of working parents. To ensure consideration for spaces that might open up at a variety of possible child care providers, a parent has had to sign up on multiple waiting lists and keep her/his application information current on each list. The same individuals are listed at multiple sites as waiting for subsidized child care slots, resulting in a substantial duplication rate of names.

As a result of duplicate waiting list entries, child care funders and providers—dealing with long waiting lists for each individual program—have had no way to assess the extent of the actual need for subsidized child care or the extent to which that need has been met over time. The fact that many income-eligible families spend months on waiting lists before being offered access to subsidized child care suggests that the level of current public subsidies is insufficient. However, without a centralized list, it is difficult to gauge the extent of the mismatch between the supply and the demand for services.

The implementation of CELs for subsidized child care offers the opportunity to realize six primary benefits across multiple stakeholders:

- **Increased efficiency and ease of applying for child care subsidies** by parents who can become eligible for all available slots by placing their name on a single eligibility list.
- **Increased parent choice among child care settings and providers** as a result of the ability to match priority households to a wider variety of available providers that meet specified parent preferences (e.g., geographic location, provider type).

- **Increased equity in allocating limited child care resources to needy households** since a centralized system can provide a single ranking of priorities across target groups, such as children of families with very low incomes and children with special needs.
- **Increased efficiency and ease of filling open child care slots** by providers who can reduce the administrative burden associated with intake, verification, and enrollment processes.
- **Improved information about county-level supply and demand for child care**, particularly for different types of care such as infant/toddler care and after-school care.
- **Improved information about the extent to which the state is succeeding in meeting the need for subsidized child care** for different subgroups of low-income working parents.

State child care planners look forward to the potential for using CELs as a powerful tool to provide consistent and accurate information about the numbers and types of households seeking subsidized care in local communities. With this information, child care planners at the local level will be better equipped to identify and address the most important gaps between the supply and demand of local child care, with particular regard to different domains of care (infant/toddler, pre-school, and school-age/after-school) and specialized types of care (e.g., part-time and evening care, care for special needs children). Child care planners at the state level hope to inform decision makers about the extent to which the state is succeeding in meeting the need for subsidized child care among low-income working parents.

Mandated by state law, local child care development and planning councils (LPCs) were charged with gathering data on the supply and demand for both subsidized and unsubsidized child care and preparing child care plans based on identified needs. LPCs were also required to begin planning for CELs for eligible families seeking subsidized child care from the California Department of Education (CDE). In response to this new mandate, and because the implementation of consolidated eligibility lists offers potential benefits to so many different groups—parents seeking care, providers interested in efficient ways to fill available slots, and child care planners interested in accurately assessing the supply and demand for subsidized child care—most California counties are currently at various stages of planning and/or implementing CEL systems.

In December 1998, eight San Francisco Bay Area counties met to share their experiences and learn from their peers about best practices in CEL planning and implementation under the sponsorship of the Quality Child Care Initiative (QCCI), a

consortium of Bay Area funders interested in early childhood issues. Based on the strong interest expressed by these counties in developing and promoting promising models for CEL design and implementation, QCCI and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation approached the state Departments of Education and Social Services about the possibility of supporting a statewide CEL planning process. As part of the resulting CEL planning process, this public-private partnership: (1) formed a statewide CEL Task Force, (2) convened regional meetings of county CEL planners and developed a CEL web site to promote information sharing and peer learning, and (3) helped address technical assistance needs of local CEL planning efforts.

The statewide CEL planning project was designed to balance the need for local flexibility and control with the strong interest in building county systems that are comparable enough to yield valid statewide data about the demand for subsidized child care. To address the concern for consistency in the data collected at the county level, the statewide CEL planning project developed a list of standardized data elements for inclusion in all county CELs. The statewide CEL planning project also began to address issues around developing a standardized database structure for county CEL lists and to identify consistent procedures for data cleaning and maintenance.

In October 2000, the Child Development Division (CDD) of the California Department of Education announced the availability of \$1.5 million in one-time state funding to support a CEL Pilot Project and invited LPCs to apply for pilot funds to either start up or improve a local CEL. On December 15, 2000, the CDD posted a list of ten proposed recipients of the CEL Pilot Project awards.¹ These ten counties were based on (1) the comprehensiveness of their CEL plans, (2) the adequacy and appropriateness of their project budgets, (3) the inclusiveness of the subsidized providers participating in the proposed CEL system, (4) the willingness of these counties to meet the data collection requirements posed by the standardized data elements and to participate in the planned evaluation, and (5) the overall diversity of the pilot sites in terms of geographic region, population density, and type of technology to support their planned CEL systems. As originally planned, the participating counties would implement and operate CELs under the pilot project for a period of 18 months, from January 1, 2001 to June 30, 2002. The evaluation period was initially designated as February 2001 to October 2002.

¹ One pilot county—Lassen County—has since withdrawn from the CEL Pilot Project.

This Interim Report comes just over one year after SPR began its evaluation of the CEL Pilot Project. While the original assumption was that the Interim Report would reflect a substantial amount of implementation progress made by counties, significant contract delays between the state and pilot counties have affected the timeline of CEL implementation as well as the timeline for SPR's evaluation activities. Specifically, without executed contracts, many pilot counties were substantially delayed in their planned CEL activities, with the result that certain evaluation activities (e.g., the second round of the family survey) had to be delayed as well. Additionally, SPR's activities became more process- rather than impact-oriented for a greater proportion of the evaluation period. The state recently announced that over half of the pilot counties have requested extensions on their contracts. SPR's evaluation period has also been extended. The final report—originally scheduled for October 2002—will now be delivered in March 2003. This Interim Report, originally due in January 2002, has been pushed back by only two months and will thus reflect the evaluation's largely process-oriented activities thus far.

DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The data sources for this report are both qualitative and quantitative in nature, and are detailed below.

- **Regular phone contact and quarterly county reports.** SPR has conducted telephone interviews with lead county contacts every two months. Interview questions are designed not only to secure a snapshot of each county's progress, but also to collect information on discrete topic areas, such as provider recruitment strategies. The telephone interviews serve as the primary source for SPR's quarterly county reports.
- **Quarterly state reports.** From the interviews with individual pilot counties, SPR has conducted cross-county analyses in order to produce quarterly reports to the state. These reports summarize the progress of the counties as a group, as well as detail key challenges and lessons learned in areas such as: provider training, interagency agreements, family outreach, and data migration.
- **CEL Status Report (November 2001).** This report reviewed the progress of SPR's evaluation to date, as well as reported the preliminary results of the first round of the family survey, administered in summer 2001.

- **Site visits.** Thus far, three site visits have been made—to Kern, Glenn and Fresno Counties. The timing of site visits has been pushed back in order to account for delays in counties' CEL implementation.
- **CEL teleconferences.** Thus far, SPR has hosted two teleconferences with CEL pilot counties. The teleconferences have served as an opportunity for counties to share challenges and best practices in key areas. For example, during the last teleconference in December 2001, counties discussed how they are managing family preferences in their CEL systems.
- **Regional meetings.** Early in the evaluation, SPR attended five regional meetings where pilot counties shared information about their CEL plans, progress, and concerns.
- **State-level interviews, first round.** SPR has conducted first-round interviews with five state-level stakeholders to secure their perspective on the expected benefits and challenges of CEL implementation.
- **Family survey data, first round.** SPR administered the first round of the family survey in summer 2001. This Interim Report draws on analysis of all completed and returned surveys.
- **MIS data.** SPR has conducted preliminary analysis of the quarterly CEL data submissions of four pilot counties. Our analysis is not only of the data itself, but also on issues of data quality and consistency across counties.
- **Document analysis.** SPR has created several internal matrices based on a review of key documents, such as the proposals submitted by pilot counties, child care research reports, and U.S. Census data.

OVERVIEW OF THE INTERIM REPORT

The remainder of this report is divided into four major chapters. *Chapter II* provides an overview of pilot counties' local contexts. Variables such as population and land area provide an important context for each particular county's CEL implementation. This chapter also analyzes the key variations in pilot counties' CEL design along a number of dimensions, including: goals and expected outcomes; CEL tasks and timetables; lead agencies' roles in CEL planning and implementation; budgets; technology and access choices; and key CEL processes (CEL flow). The challenges, successes, and best practices of CEL implementation are the subject of *Chapter III*. Specific subtopics include CEL design and planning, provider outreach, interagency agreements, family education, and data management. *Chapter IV* presents preliminary findings on CEL family characteristics. Finally, in *Chapter V* we provide a

I. Introduction

synthesis and discussion of CELs' potential, as well as interim implications for the state and others to consider given the progress of CEL pilot counties thus far.

II. KEY VARIATIONS IN LOCAL CONTEXT AND CEL DESIGN

In this chapter we examine key variations in pilot counties' local context as well as in their CEL design. We examine local contextual factors for three primary reasons. First, local contextual factors such as population density and land area provide a basic snapshot of each pilot county. Second, part of the state's rationale for funding these particular counties was to ensure diversity in terms of geographic region and demographic profile so that a broad range of implementation experiences could be studied. Third, local context provides insight into the factors that may influence the way CELs are being designed and implemented in each county, and the types of CEL outcomes and impacts that are ultimately observed. For instance, of all the pilot counties, San Francisco County has the highest population density combined with the smallest land area. Families in San Francisco County may be able to consider a wider range of child care openings because it is feasible for them to reach a greater number of locations across the city, even when using the public transportation system. Families in more rural and/or sprawling counties such as Fresno, Glenn or Los Angeles may be much more limited in their options, particularly when relying on limited public transportation systems.

In addition to the variations in pilot counties' local contextual factors, in this chapter we also analyze the variations in pilot counties' CEL designs, particularly with regard to the following elements: goals and expected outcomes; CEL tasks and timetables; lead agencies' roles in CEL planning and implementation; budgets; technology and access choices; and key CEL processes (CEL flow). We examine pilot counties' differences along these key design dimensions, with the assumption that they will also help to explain variations in CELs' observable outcomes and ultimate impact at the family, provider, and community levels.

PILOT COUNTIES' LOCAL CONTEXTS

As revealed by Exhibit II.1, the nine pilot counties vary tremendously along several key dimensions: population; land area; population density; number of children under age 14; ethnic composition; median annual household income; and percent and number of children age 0-17 living in poverty.

The nine counties range in population from 26,453 in Glenn County to 9,519,338 in Los Angeles County. The median population of the nine counties is 707,161. While Glenn County and Los Angeles County have the smallest and largest number of children under age 14, respectively, in San Francisco County the number of children under age 14 comprises the

smallest percentage of the total population (11%), while this same age group comprises the largest percentage of the total population in Fresno and Kern Counties (25%).

Only three of the nine pilot counties have majority white populations (Butte, Glenn, and Ventura), although whites are the plurality in four other pilot counties (Kern, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Solano). Hispanics/Latinos are the plurality in two pilot counties (Fresno and Los Angeles). Asians comprise anywhere between 3.3% (Butte) and 30.8% (San Francisco) of the pilot counties' total populations, while blacks range from 0.6% (Glenn) to 14.9% (Solano) of total populations.

Exhibit II.1 shows that among the nine pilot counties, the median annual household income ranges from \$28,649 (Glenn) to \$57,267 (San Mateo). The average percent of children age 0-17 living in poverty is 25%, with Fresno County having the highest percent (38%) and San Mateo County having the lowest percent (10%).

Finally, the nine pilot counties range significantly in terms of geographic area. The median land area of the nine counties is 1,639 square miles, with San Francisco having the smallest land area at 47 square miles and Kern having the largest at 8,141 square miles. Three of the pilot counties are classified as low density, three as medium density, and three as high density. Although two of the three smallest counties are high density counties, the three largest counties represent low, medium, and high densities.

Exhibit II.1: Snapshot of Pilot Counties' Local Context¹

Pilot County	Population	Land Area (square miles)	Population Density	Number of Children Under Age 14	Ethnic Composition	Median Annual Household Income	Percent and Number of Children Age 0-17 Living in Poverty
Butte	203,171	1,639	low	36,830	white, not Hispanic 80%; black 1.4%; American Indian 1.9%; Asian 3.3%; Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander .1%; Hispanic or Latino origin 10.5%	\$29,367	31%; 15,069
Fresno	799,407	5,963	medium	200,136	white, not Hispanic 39.7%; black 5.3%; American Indian 1.6%; Asian 8.1%; Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander .1%; Hispanic or Latino origin 44%	\$31,587	38%; 97,442
Glenn	26,453	1,315	low	6,188	white, not Hispanic 62.6%; black .6%; American Indian 2.1%; Asian 3.4%; Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander .1%; Hispanic or Latino origin 29.6%	\$28,649	29%; 2,377
Kern	661,645	8,141	low	165,111	white, not Hispanic 49.5%; black 6%; American Indian 1.5%; Asian 3.4%; Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander .1%; Hispanic or Latino origin 38.4%	\$32,359	30%; 63,836

¹ All data presented in Exhibit II.1 are drawn from the 2000 U.S. Census, except for the total number of children under age 14 (which is drawn from The California Child Care Portfolio, 2001); the percent and number of children age 0-17 living in poverty (which is also drawn from the Portfolio); and population density (which is drawn from pilot county documents from CDE/CDD).

Pilot County	Population	Land Area (square miles)	Population Density	Number of Children Under Age 14	Ethnic Composition	Median Annual Household Income	Percent and Number of Children Age 0-17 Living in Poverty
Los Angeles	9,519,338	4,061	high	2,125,915	white, not Hispanic 31.1%; black 9.8%; American Indian .8%; Asian 11.9%; Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander .3%; Hispanic or Latino origin 44.6%	\$36,441	31%; 813,733
San Francisco	776,733	47	high	88,033	white, not Hispanic 43.6%; black 7.8%; American Indian .4%; Asian 30.8%; Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander .5%; Hispanic or Latino origin 14.1%	\$43,405	22%; 24,478
San Mateo	707,161	449	high	128,020	white, not Hispanic 49.8%; black 3.5%; American Indian .4%; Asian 20%; Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander 1.3%; Hispanic or Latino origin 21.9%	\$57,267	10%; 15,400
Solano	394,542	829	medium	87,067	white, not Hispanic 49.2%; black 14.9%; American Indian .8%; Asian 12.7%; Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander .8%; Hispanic or Latino origin 17.6%	\$46,115	17%; 19,015
Ventura	753,197	1,845	medium	168,047	white, not Hispanic 56.8%; black 1.9%; American Indian .9%; Asian 5.3%; Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander .2%; Hispanic or Latino origin 33.4%	\$49,763	17%; 35,565

Exhibit II.2 provides a snapshot of child care supply and demand in the nine pilot counties. Specifically, the table shows the number of licensed child care slots, the number of children needing care (not just subsidized care), and licensed slots as a percent of need in each pilot county. The data presented in these three columns are drawn from *The California Child Care Portfolio, 2001*. While the data provide valuable insight into the unmet need for child care in each county, there are two important limitations. First, the supply data do not include the number of *license-exempt* child care slots—e.g., provided by relatives, friends, and nannies. Second, the demand data are based on the number of children of working parents¹—a number that may greatly underestimate a county’s need for child care. The table below shows that among the nine pilot counties, Los Angeles has the lowest percent of met need (16%), while San Francisco has the highest (41%).

Exhibit II.2 also reveals the number and names of the Resource and Referral (R&R) agencies and Alternative Payment (AP) providers present in each pilot county—ranging in number from one to 14. All pilot counties have a range of subsidized state and federal child care programs available, including the following: general child care and development; state preschool program; programs serving special populations such as migrant child care, campus child care, severely handicapped program, and School Age Community Child Care Program (Latchkey); family child care homes; Head Start; the AP program; and three stages of CalWORKs child care.

¹ Children of working parents are defined as children living with two employed parents or an employed single head of household.

Exhibit II.2: Snapshot of Pilot Counties' Child Care Context¹

Pilot County	Number of Licensed Child Care Slots	Number of Children Needing Care	Licensed Slots as a Percent of Need	Names of R&R Agencies and AP Providers
Butte	5,174	19,800	26%	1) Valley Oak Children's Services (VOCS)—R&R/AP
Fresno	21,177	96,924	22%	1) Central Valley Children's Services Network—R&R/AP 2) Supportive Services, Inc.—AP 3) PACE—AP
Glenn	986	3,127	32%	1) Department of Child and Family Services—R&R/AP
Kern	17,497	87,623	20%	1) Community Connection for Child Care—R&R/AP
Los Angeles	209,815	1,321,043	16%	1) Child Care Information Service—R&R/AP 2) Child Care Resource Center—R&R/AP 3) Child and Family Services—R&R/AP 4) Child Care Resource Center of the San Fernando Valley—R&R/AP 5) Child Care Resource Center—R&R/AP 6) Children's Home Society of California—R&R/AP 7) Connections for Children—R&R/AP 8) Crystal Stairs, Inc.—R&R/AP 9) Center for Community and Family Services—R&R/AP 10) Mexican American Opportunity Foundation—R&R/AP 11) Options—R&R/AP 12) Pomona Unified School District—R&R/AP 13) City of Norwalk—AP 14) Drew Child Development Corporation—AP 15) International Institute—AP

¹ Data presented in Exhibit II.2 are drawn from The California Child Care Portfolio, 2001, except for the last column on R&R agencies and AP providers.

Pilot County	Number of Licensed Child Care Slots	Number of Children Needing Care	Licensed Slots as a Percent of Need	Names of R&R Agencies and AP Providers
San Francisco	21,536	52,246	41%	1) Children’s Council of San Francisco—R&R/AP 2) Wu Yee Children’s Services—R&R/AP 3) PACE—AP
San Mateo	22,462	84,831	26%	1) Child Care Coordinating Council of San Mateo County—R&R/AP 2) The San Mateo Human Services Agency—AP 3) PACE—AP
Solano	12,678	53,922	24%	1) Solano Family and Children’s Council—R&R/AP
Ventura	24,007	102,218	23%	1) Child Development Resources of Ventura County, Inc.—R&R/AP

PILOT COUNTIES' CEL DESIGN

While pilot counties vary tremendously in terms of their local contextual factors, they share many similarities with regard to certain CEL design dimensions. For instance, most of the pilot counties outlined similar goals and expected outcomes for their CELs and involved a similar set of key stakeholders. Pilot counties varied more with regard to other dimensions of CEL design—namely budget, technology, and connectivity choices.

Goals and Outcomes

Three of the nine pilot counties (Kern, San Mateo, and Solano Counties) were funded by the state to maintain, improve, and/or expand a pre-existing CEL system. The remaining six counties were funded on the basis of their plans for establishing CELs. This distinction between new CELs and improved CELs naturally has implications for pilot counties' scope of work. For instance, in Kern County, the pre-existence of a CEL meant that (1) many crucial decisions (e.g., technology) had already been made prior the pilot period, and (2) many important challenges had been previously identified, experienced, and/or overcome. As a result, Kern County's scope of work was much more narrowly defined than a pilot county such as Los Angeles, which incorporated a preliminary research phase into their CEL work plan in order to gather information about the CEL experiences and decisions of other counties.

Despite differences in scope of work, a review of pilot counties' goals and expected outcomes—as detailed in proposals and telephone interviews—finds many natural similarities. For instance, nearly all counties expect their CELs to: improve families' access to subsidized care; streamline the application process for families, by making it less cumbersome and time-consuming; reduce providers' administrative burden, by increasing the pool of eligible families and improving the process of filling available slots; and provide accurate, non-duplicative data on the demand for subsidized child care for the benefit of local planners and policymakers.

Half of the pilot counties expected that their CELs would serve as a catalyst for improving the collaborations not only among child care providers, but also between child care providers and other community agencies so that together they might address a full range of family needs in an integrated fashion. Half of the pilot counties also stated goals around the CEL improving service to multicultural populations. For instance, one pilot county expressed that CEL staff would provide services in a “linguistically appropriate” manner; another county stated that CEL data would provide valuable information on the language needs of parents in need of subsidized care.

Overall, pilot counties rarely expressed their goals and expected outcomes in a quantitative manner (e.g., a percent increase in applications taken by bilingual staff). Pilot counties also rarely identified the specific types of data analysis that would be performed with their CEL data. Fresno and San Francisco Counties were exceptions. For instance, one of Fresno County's stated goals is to identify child care needs at the zip code and Census block group level. San Francisco County stated that it will identify neighborhoods with high rates of vacancies and will determine the average amount of time that a family on the CEL waits for subsidized child care.

Other goals explicitly cited by three or fewer pilot counties included: using CEL as a tool for all child care needs, not just subsidized child care needs; conducting an evaluation of families' CEL experiences; and increasing the capacity of families to make more informed choices about child care.

CEL Tasks and Timetables

While pilot counties share similar overarching CEL goals, the counties have organized their key CEL tasks with a varying degree of detail. Exhibit II.3 provides a snapshot of each pilot county's key stages or tasks for CEL implementation—as detailed in their proposals—along with any associated timetables (as originally formulated). The third column identifies each county's *originally* anticipated full CEL implementation date. The fourth column provides a *non-comprehensive* update on each pilot county's status, particularly in terms of revised plans and timetables for implementation. Overall, this table demonstrates how pilot counties have organized their key CEL tasks, as well as the extent to which pilot counties have experienced implementation delays.

As of late February 2002, only one county did not yet have a fully executed contract with the state. June 2001 was the earliest that any pilot county had a fully executed contract. Four of the nine pilot counties had fully executed contracts by July 2001. Three additional counties had fully executed contracts by November 2001. Exhibit II.3 reveals that pilot counties have had to delay their full CEL implementation dates by at least six months and up to twelve months later than originally anticipated.

Overall, while pilot counties share similar key CEL tasks (e.g., migrating data from providers' individual lists, and providing CEL training), only one county (Los Angeles) explicitly incorporates preliminary research as a key CEL task, and only two counties (Butte and Solano) explicitly state that addressing the hardware and technological capacity of providers will be part of a key CEL task. However it should be noted that as counties describe

II. Key Variations in Local Context and CEL Design

their key tasks with varying levels of detail, it is not possible to conclude that no other counties besides Butte and Solano are directly addressing providers' technological capacity as part of their CEL pilot projects.

Exhibit II.3: CEL Implementation Tasks and Timetables

Pilot County	Key Stages or Tasks	Original Implementation Goal	Status and Revised Plans
Butte	<p>Initial introduction: informational meetings with subsidized centers; incorporate eligibility lists of centers into joint list.</p> <p>Phase 1: incorporate one program's list into R&R agency's eligibility list as feasibility study. (Completed January 1999.)</p> <p>Phase 2: development of alternate CEL plan initiated; second set of informational/community meetings held; feedback on NoHo Internet format; define partnership between LPC and R&R agency. (Completed Spring 2000.)</p> <p>Phase 3: introduce CEL project concept to community groups to create buy-in. (Completed July 2000.)</p> <p>Phase 4: conduct assessment of current hardware/software capacity; purchase NoHo software to support database; increase computer, network and Internet capacity; produce access to the list for community and providers; facilitate planning for NoHo CEL on the Internet. (Completed September 2000/January 2001.)</p> <p>Phase 5: contract David Grant Computer Consultants for Technical Assistance (T.A.) and training on software use; create conversion program to transfer existing R&R agency list and data elements to NoHo CEL format. (To be completed April 2001.)</p> <p>Initial Implementation Phase: R&R agency and 4Cs will begin to use the CEL on the Internet as small-scale, trial approach; provide training for intake workers and 4 Cs center staff on database/CEL usage. (To be completed May 2001.) Incorporate remaining providers' lists into CEL and begin countywide advertising; provide ongoing training. (To be completed by August 2001.)</p>	By September 2001.	Contract executed June 2001. As of February 2002, still converting R&R agency and other lists and data to CEL format; reevaluating whether to allow parents direct access.

Pilot County	Key Stages or Tasks	Original Implementation Goal	Status and Revised Plans
Fresno	<p>Implementation Phase: waiting list data from all other participating agencies and centers entered into CEL; advertise CEL and access points throughout community; facilitate development and implementation of community access points; facilitate ongoing training on CEL usage and issues; provide individualized training. (To be completed September 2001.)</p> <p>Design Phase: development of design plan; development of business rules (policies and procedures); define data structure (what to track); identify the users and their needs. (January—March 2001.)</p> <p>Coding Phase: development of GIS and databases; development of code (screens). (February—April 2001.)</p> <p>Design Team Review: (April—May 2001.)</p> <p>Testing: (May—June 2001.)</p> <p>Implementation, Technical Assistance, and Training: implementation based on limited number of participating entities; increase number of participants to non-subsidized providers, agencies, general public. (January—June 2001.)</p>	January—June 2001.	<p>Contract executed June 2001.</p> <p>As of February 2002, data migration had recently begun, and duplicate CEL applications had been eliminated.</p> <p>CEL prototype completed.</p>
Glenn	<p>January/February 2001: hire and train new CEL Project Coordinator and support staff; begin transition of eligibility lists of Stage One programs into KinderWait.</p> <p>March/April 2001: complete transition of existing Stage One eligibility lists (6) into KinderWait; address concerns and needs of Stage One programs; develop written agreements on confidentiality; begin training program staff and community partners in accessing CEL and entering data; establish agreements with programs on retrieving family information; ensure measures in place to test standard data elements; begin publicizing CEL through media and presentations; bring Migrant Education on board to CEL.</p>	July/August 2001.	<p>Contract executed June 2001.</p> <p>As of February 2002, still in Stage One although have secured verbal commitment from two Stage Two programs. Number of planned Stage Two programs reduced.</p>

Pilot County	Key Stages or Tasks	Original Implementation Goal	Status and Revised Plans
Kern	<p>May/July 2001: begin transition of Stage Two programs into CEL; begin regular meetings to evaluate CEL methodology, progress, and challenges.</p> <p>August 2001/June 2002: begin developing centralized “waiting” list for families who don’t qualify for subsidized child care; report to state and local policymakers on data findings on families who need child care but who do not qualify for subsidies; make necessary changes to CEL.</p> <p>Tasks of the pilot project: hire supervisor and two additional support staff; retain the services of a consultant for language translation; purchase related equipment, furniture, and office space; purge incomplete/inaccurate family data; complete manual on CEL protocols and procedures; expand to recruit and serve all subsidized programs in Kern County; expand to serve additional families in underserved area who become aware of CCCIS services; facilitate countywide participation by all subsidized programs.</p>	No date provided. ¹	<p>Contract executed July 2001.</p> <p>As of February 2002, the County had completed its data purge, finished its manual and other guideline materials, and was continuing efforts to expand the number of participating programs.</p>
Los Angeles	<p>Research: contact counties with operational CELs; contact and collect input from all county stakeholders.</p> <p>Pilot Participant Selection: identify and select interested participants.</p> <p>Design/Selection of System: research available CEL software; define data</p>	June 2002.	<p>Contract executed November 2001.</p> <p>As of February 2002, the County</p>

¹ Kern County had a pre-existing CEL; no date was provided for scheduled improvement(s).

Pilot County	Key Stages or Tasks	Original Implementation Goal	Status and Revised Plans
	<p>elements and programs to be included; recruit consultant; finalize software and hardware selection; explore options for low-cost equipment for contractors; determine how data in existing systems will transfer to CEL; install and test system with pilot participants.</p> <p>Communication/Education: establish public relations and education channels; identify point persons and web site to provide project information; convene contractor meetings.</p> <p>Implementation: develop plan for ongoing funding; develop training program for all contractors; develop rollout plan (full implementation).</p> <p>Evaluation: establish standards by which to measure CEL success; monitor contractor progress and satisfaction on monthly basis; develop post-implementation evaluation program.</p>		<p>was still in its planning stage and developing key CEL policies (e.g., around parental and provider access). Fifteen providers have been identified for pilot testing. CEL software has not been chosen, although the County has hired a consultant, CompuMentor.</p> <p>Full implementation will not occur until after the pilot period, and will depend on ongoing funding.</p>
San Francisco	<p>System design: (To be completed by April 2001).</p> <p>Roll out: CEL system will be rolled out to participating agencies. (May—June 2001.)</p> <p>Maintenance: CEL system will be maintained for the remainder of the pilot project time period. (June 2001—June 2002.)</p>	June 2001.	<p>As of February 2002, contract not yet executed.</p> <p>As of February 2002, the two major stages of CEL implementation scheduled for March/April 2002.</p>

Pilot County	Key Stages or Tasks	Original Implementation Goal	Status and Revised Plans
<p>San Mateo</p>	<p>Early Spring 2001: staff time for CEL maintenance increased; change to NoHoCARE software; training of staff; transfer of existing CEL database; ensure that standardized data elements, procedures and evaluation requirements in place; outreach and publicity materials developed and disseminated to programs.</p> <p>Ongoing over 18-month pilot period: disseminate CEL materials at 6-month intervals to ensure both program and parent familiarity; hold quarterly meetings with participating programs on specific topics—such as overview of pilot project, presentation by software consultant, discuss options for Internet-based CEL; participate in testing of standard data elements; system procedures, and pilot requirements; participate in CEL evaluation activities.</p>	<p>Spring 2001 (to make switch to new CEL system).</p>	<p>Despite contract delays, County has gone forward with many of its planned activities, including a CEL kickoff and orientation meeting for providers.</p> <p>Contract executed October 2001.</p> <p>The County decided to switch from NoHoCARE to Controltec's KinderWait software.</p> <p>As of February 2002, the SMP database had been converted to KinderWait system.</p> <p>Data cleaning process ongoing.</p> <p>Staff training on new database to take place in March.</p>

Pilot County	Key Stages or Tasks	Original Implementation Goal	Status and Revised Plans
<p>Solano</p>	<p>January—March 2001: inclusion of statewide data elements into the CEL; purchase connectivity needs for sites; connected sites will test improved CEL.</p> <p>April—June 2001: computers and other online elements will be installed; connected sites will test improved CEL; all sites fully connected and able to access site; training #1 and #2 conducted in an Internet-connected computer lab.</p> <p>July—September 2001: onsite training and T.A. provided on an as-needed basis; hold quarterly update and evaluation meeting #1.</p> <p>October—December 2001: onsite training and T.A. provided on as-needed basis; hold quarterly update and evaluation meeting #2.</p> <p>January—March 2002: onsite training and T.A. provided on as-needed basis; T.A. provided by administrators of the system; hold quarterly update and evaluation meeting #3.</p> <p>April—June 2002: T.A. provided by administrators of the system; hold quarterly update and evaluation meeting #4.</p>	<p>May 2001 (all sites will be able to access the site).</p>	<p>Contract executed February 2002.</p> <p>As of February 2002, the County's Internet-based CEL is not fully functional or utilized since they were waiting for a contract to make improvements to existing system.</p> <p>Necessary computers for providers have been purchased and are being installed. A letter updating providers on CEL status was mailed out in February.</p> <p>Will need to resolve possible vendor change issue.</p>

Pilot County	Key Stages or Tasks	Original Implementation Goal	Status and Revised Plans
Ventura	<p>February/March 2001: hire and train staff; finalize MOUs with CDE-funded providers.</p> <p>April/May 2001: install PCs in outstation settings; data entry; test system; limited operation.</p> <p>June 2001—June 2002: full implementation.</p>	June 2002.	<p>Contract executed October 2001.</p> <p>As of February 2002, nine providers will be active CEL participants once MOUs are signed (by early March). Five providers are currently drawing names from the CEL. Promotion efforts continue, particularly with smaller providers.</p> <p>Full implementation expected by June 2002.</p>

Lead Agencies and Roles and Responsibilities

In order to carry out the tasks associated with their CEL pilot projects, the nine pilot counties have involved a range of lead agencies and partners in their CEL planning and implementation efforts. Exhibit II.4 provides a summary of these lead agencies along with their respective roles and responsibilities. Not surprisingly, the key players in nearly every pilot county include the LPC, a R&R agency, and the county office of education or superintendent of schools. The LPC tends to play more of a supervisory or guidance role, while the other agencies often play a day-to-day, CEL project management role. For instance, in San Francisco County, the LPC develops CEL policies and procedures, while the R&R agency houses the data center and provides daily database supervision and technical support. In at least three other counties, the CEL is housed at a R&R agency.

Exhibit II.4: Roles of Lead Agencies in CEL Pilot Counties

Pilot County	Lead Agencies	Roles and Responsibilities
Butte	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Butte County Office of Education (BCOE). • Butte County Local Child Care Planning Council (LPC). • Valley Oaks Children’s Services (VOCS)— County R&R agency. • David Grant—vendor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LPC provides overall leadership and development. • BCOE provides overall pilot project coordination. • LPC, BCOE and VOCS will jointly administer the CEL. • VOCS will house CEL and help with maintenance.
Fresno	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresno County Office of Education—lead agency for LPC. • Children’s Services Network (CSN)—County R&R agency. • California State University at Fresno’s Interdisciplinary Spatial Information Systems (ISIS) Center. • Agricultural Technology Initiative. • Human Services System. • Fresno Area Child Development Consortium. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Office of Education monitors CEL development and implementation. • CSN serves as public interface for CEL—will receive family applications, verify eligibility criteria, assign priority. • ISIS Center serves as central data repository, analyzes data, and makes data accessible to partnering agencies. ISIS also provides design for CEL system. • Agricultural Technology Initiative helps ISIS with CEL system design and data collection. • Consortium partners with LPC for CEL implementation.
Glenn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glenn County Office of Education. • Department of Child and Family Services’ R&R and AP Programs (under GCOE). • Glenn County Local Child Care Planning Council (LPC). • Controltec—vendor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Child and Family Services will house the CEL as well as the CEL Project Coordinator. • LPC will provide CEL guidance. • Controltec will host and maintain web site.
Kern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS). • Community Connection for Child Care—County R&R agency. • Kern County Child Care Council (LPC). • Centralized Child Care Information Services (CCCIS)— program operated by LPC, under KCSOS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCSOS houses the CEL, and is responsible for data entry, maintenance, and referrals.

Pilot County	Lead Agencies	Roles and Responsibilities
Los Angeles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. • Child Care Planning Committee (LPC). • Service Integration Branch of the Chief Administrative Office. • CompuMentor—technology consultant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Supervisors is legal entity for CEL Project. • LPC and Service Integration Branch will operate CEL project. • CompuMentor provides project management services.
San Francisco	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • San Francisco Department of Children, Youth & Their Families (DCYF). • San Francisco Child Care Planning and Advisory Council (CPAC, the LPC). • Children’s Council of San Francisco—County R&R agency. • Stone Ground Solutions—database consultant. • CompuMentor—technology consultant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCYF is the legal entity for CEL Project. • CPAC develops CEL policies and procedures. • Children’s Council to house data center and provide daily database supervision and technical support. • Stone Ground Solutions designed database and provides technology consulting. • CompuMentor provides project management services.
San Mateo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Care Coordinating Council—County R&R agency/AP provider. • Child Care Partnership Council (LPC). • Controltec—vendor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating Council houses and maintains the CEL and oversees CEL project implementation. • LPC assists Coordinating Council.
Solano	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solano’s Local Child Care Planning Council (LCCPC, the LPC). • Children’s Network of Solano County (Network)—an interagency child advocacy coalition. • Solano Family and Children’s Services (SFCS)—County R&R agency/AP provider. • School Web Services—web site development and support firm. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCCPC is the coordinating entity for the planning process. • Network and SFCS are the CEL system administrators. • School Web Services houses server for web site and provides support services for operational aspects of project.
Ventura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ventura County Superintendent of Schools Office. • Health Programs Department. • Ventura County Child Care Planning Council (CCPC, the LPC). • Child Development Resources of Ventura County (CDR)—County R&R agency/AP provider. • Controltec—vendor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent of Schools Office and Health Programs Department provide administrative oversight. • CDR responsible for CEL implementation and for entering provider data into the CEL. • Controltec hosts CEL web site.

CEL Budgets

Pilot counties' 18-month² total CEL budgets range from a low of \$77,056 to a high of \$259,000. However, the portion of the CEL budget requested from the state (referred to here as the state budget) ranges from a low of \$31,344.60 to a high of \$252,936, with a median of \$121,441. For four of the pilot counties (Butte, Fresno, Kern, and Ventura), the state budget is identical to the total CEL budget. Six of the nine pilot counties cited grants, donations, and/or in-kind contributions from other sources, ranging from a \$10,000 LPC grant, to \$153,500 of in-kind contributions from a wide range of community partners.

Because computer technology plays a prominent role in CEL systems, in Exhibit II.5, we review counties' proposed hardware and software expenses, specifically as a proportion of their state budgets. However, the proposed hardware and software expenses may not reflect the actual amount spent on hardware and software (e.g., some counties use income from other, non-state sources to purchase hardware and software). The hardware and software expenses in Exhibit II-5 do not include the service costs of software consultants and vendors. For instance, San Francisco County's proposed hardware and software expenses do not include the amount paid to their consultant who designed the County's CEL database.

As demonstrated by Exhibit II.5, proposed hardware and software expenses account for anywhere between .01% and 35% of pilot counties' state budgets. Two of the three lowest percentages are associated with counties that had pre-existing CEL systems (Kern and San Mateo). The third county with a pre-existing CEL (Solano) has an inflated percentage due to the fact that its state budget is considerably smaller than that of other pilot counties. The *dollar total* of Solano County's proposed hardware and software expenses is among the three lowest dollar totals.

² The CEL Pilot Project budget was originally defined as January 1, 2001 through June 30, 2002. However, as of February 2002, at least five pilot counties are requesting contract extensions and/or budget revisions.

Exhibit II.5: Pilot Counties' Hardware and Software Expenses

Pilot County	State Budget³	Hardware and Software Expenses	Hardware and Software Expenses as % of State Budget
Butte	\$77,056	\$27,060	35%
Fresno	\$355,713	\$115,345	32%
Glenn	\$83,411	\$0 ⁴	N/A
Kern	\$252,936	\$3,399	.01%
Los Angeles	\$249,000	\$50,000	20%
San Francisco	\$192,629	\$21,000	11%
San Mateo	\$111,359	\$1,203	.01%
Solano	\$31,344	\$8,509	27%
Ventura	\$121,441	\$0 ⁵	N/A

CEL Technology and Access

Technology's prominent role in pilot counties' state budgets reflects its prominent role in CEL design and policy. Two of the most basic, yet crucial, decisions that pilot counties have faced are: (1) the types of technology to utilize for the CEL, and (2) the types of CEL

³ These state budget figures are the *initially approved* figures, and do not take into account pending budget revisions. San Francisco County's state budget figure has not been approved since the County does not yet have a fully executed contract with the state.

⁴ While Glenn County is not using any of its state funds for hardware/software expenses, it is using \$7,000 from other sources for these expenses.

⁵ Ventura County purchased \$98,937 worth of hardware and software for its CEL project prior to submitting its proposal to the state.

connectivity to allow providers and families. Exhibit II.6 provides a snapshot of pilot counties' technology and connectivity choices thus far.

With regard to technology, Exhibit II.6 shows whether each pilot county has chosen a locally networked or Internet-accessible CEL system. We find that no pilot county hosts their CEL on a single, non-networked computer.⁶ All but two pilot counties (Kern and San Mateo) have Internet-accessible CEL systems. In Kern County, the CEL database is hosted on a local server and may be accessed by other computers on the local network, but is not accessible via the Internet. San Mateo County has decided to treat their improved CEL system as a locally-networked system during the pilot period, but recognizes Internet-accessibility as a valuable future development for their CEL. Thus San Mateo's CEL system, based on Controltec's KinderWait software, is Internet-ready.

Exhibit II.6 also displays each pilot county's system design choice for their CEL—specifically, whether each county uses a pre-packaged or custom-made system. Four pilot counties chose vendor systems that specialize in CELs (three use KinderWait, one uses NoHo CARE), four counties chose custom-made systems, and one county (Los Angeles) remains undecided in this matter.⁷ Two of the four custom-made counties (Fresno and Kern) enjoyed particularly close, pre-existing relationships with their CEL system architects. In Fresno County, the ISIS Center—which is a U.S. Census Bureau Data Center and part of a regional GIS consortium—had worked previously with local child care agencies on a Title IV child care research project, and was tapped to design the CEL system. In Kern County, the custom-made system was designed in-house by a Kern County Superintendent of Schools' Management Information Systems (MIS) specialist who had worked at length with the County's pre-existing CEL system.

The pilot counties represent a range of provider⁸ and family connectivity—from limiting read and write access to the CEL database to staff members, to affording providers with

⁶ For their original proposals to the state, pilot counties were asked to check one of the following boxes for CEL technology: Internet, Networked, Central Computer, or Other. While Kern and San Mateo Counties were checked Central Computer, our evaluation reveals that these two counties actually have locally networked systems, and that for clarity, the choices should have been: Internet-accessible; Local Network Only; or Single, Non-Networked Computer.

⁷ While we make a distinction between pre-packaged and custom-made systems, pre-packaged systems (such as KinderWait) do allow a certain degree of customization for each county.

⁸ By provider, we mean to include not only child care providers, but also relevant social service agencies participating in the CEL.

limited read and write access to the CEL (e.g., the ability to conduct searches for eligible families). The range of provider and family connectivity is further detailed below.

- **Provider access for submitting, entering, and updating data.** In some counties, the only “connection” providers have to the CEL is the ability to submit family information over the Internet. In some counties, providers may enter and update family information directly into the CEL. In counties such as San Francisco, Solano and Fresno, there is a designated staff person (e.g., the Data Center Administrator in San Francisco) who serves as a data entry backup for providers who submit hard copy applications because they lack Internet connections.
- **Provider access for retrieving data.** In some counties, providers may retrieve eligible families directly from the CEL when they have an opening. Four of the five counties that allow (or will allow) for this type of provider connectivity (Fresno, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Solano, and Ventura) also allow for providers to enter and update family information directly into the CEL.
- **Family access for submitting data.** Three pilot counties (Fresno, Glenn, and Los Angeles) allow for families to submit their information for the CEL over the Internet.⁹ Of these three counties, only Glenn County allows for families to do this via *any* Internet connection (e.g., at home). In Fresno and Glenn Counties, the family can submit their information over the Internet only at participating agencies.

No pilot county allows families to read CEL information. Families’ access to the CEL is limited to the ability to write and submit an application over the Internet. Furthermore, none of the pilot counties allow providers full access to the CEL database. That is, providers can not read all information contained in the CEL; the most read access they have is the ability to read the results of a search for eligible families.

Within the range of connectivity described above, Kern and San Mateo Counties occupy one end of the spectrum, with neither county allowing provider or family access to the CEL system.¹⁰ Los Angeles County occupies the opposite end of spectrum, with a system that will allow providers to enter, update, and retrieve CEL information, and will allow families—through partnering agencies—to submit their information over the Internet. Between these two ends exists a mid-ground of provider and family connectivity, as evidenced by Exhibit II.6.

⁹ Counties that allow families to submit information via the Internet also allow for families to apply in more traditional ways—e.g., through a hard copy application.

¹⁰ In these counties, providers and families submit information to the CEL in more traditional ways (e.g., hard copy applications, telephone calls).

In Glenn County, decisions around provider access were recently revisited due to potential equity issues. Originally, providers were responsible for entering and updating data directly into the CEL, and were allowed to retrieve referrals directly from the CEL. While County administrators generally felt that providers would follow the state-mandated priority rankings, they also felt that if providers could directly access the CEL for referrals, there was a slim chance that providers might choose the most desirable children for their program. In order to prevent this, in a verbal agreement, the County determined that the CEL Project Coordinator would be invested with primary responsibility for accessing the CEL for referrals and entering/updating family data. Investing the Project Coordinator with this level of access not only prevents programs from selective choosing, but also establishes a measure of centralized accountability, consistency of procedures, and fairness to all families. This decision also allowed providers to spend more time on programmatic versus administrative duties.¹¹

Decisions to limit *family* access to the CEL have been made for a range of reasons, but Kern and San Francisco Counties provide two particularly interesting examples of decision making in this area. Both counties deliberately chose an individualized, customer-service model for their CEL. In Kern County, key CEL planners felt that a customer-service model—whereby parents receive interpersonal, one-on-one counseling and attention to their child care needs—was absolutely essential to meet the unique needs of Kern County families. In San Francisco County, the decision to limit family access was made in the interest of consumer education. Specifically, the County felt that if families had to go through providers to add their name to the CEL, there would be an opportunity to ensure that families truly understood the CEL process, and could be referred to any other appropriate social service agencies.

We emphasize that the connectivity decisions represented in Exhibit II.6 are not static. For instance, some pilot counties are still considering the possibility of increasing family connectivity to the CEL at some point in the future, or transitioning to direct provider access for entering and updating CEL data. Furthermore, some of the information presented in Exhibit II.6 represents decisions not yet implemented.

¹¹ Providers in Kern County—who also do not have primary responsibility for entering or retrieving CEL data—have also expressed that using the CEL has relieved them of many administrative duties (related to recruitment, verification, and enrollment) and has allowed them to spend more time on program-related issues.

Exhibit II.6: Pilot Counties' CEL Technology and Access

Pilot County	Local Network Only	Internet-Accessible	System Design: Pre-packaged or Custom-made	Provider Access for Submitting, Entering, Updating, and Retrieving Data	Family Access for Submitting Data to CEL
Butte		✓	Pre-packaged: David Grant, NoHo CARE.	Re-evaluating.	Re-evaluating.
Fresno		✓	Custom-made: ISIS Department at California State University at Fresno.	Providers may enter and update family information on the CEL. ¹ Providers can directly access CEL for referrals.	Families can submit application over the Internet only through partnering agencies, such as subsidized providers and family child care home networks.
Glenn		✓	Pre-packaged: Controltec, KinderWait.	Providers may submit family applications over the Internet to the CEL Project Coordinator. Providers do not enter or update family data on the CEL. Providers do not directly access CEL for referrals.	Families may submit application over the Internet at home, or may do so at one of the community agencies that has agreed to help parents enter data.
Kern	✓		Custom-made: MIS Specialist at Kern County Superintendent of Schools.	Providers have no access to the CEL.	Families have no access to the CEL.
Los Angeles		✓	Undecided.	Providers will be able to enter and update family information on the CEL. Providers will directly access CEL for referrals.	Families will be able to submit application over Internet only through participating providers and agencies.

¹ The information providers enter is first reviewed by an intermediary, the R&R agency, before passing on to ISIS, where the CEL is housed.

Pilot County	Local Network Only	Internet-Accessible	System Design: Pre-packaged or Custom-made	Provider Access for Submitting, Entering, Updating, and Retrieving Data	Family Access for Submitting Data to CEL
San Francisco		✓	Custom-made: Stone Ground Solutions.	Providers may enter and update family information on the CEL. Providers can directly access CEL for referrals.	Families have no access to the CEL.
San Mateo	✓		Pre-packaged: Controltec, KinderWait.	Providers have no access to the CEL.	Families have no access to the CEL.
Solano		✓	Custom-made: School Web Services.	Providers may enter and update family information on the CEL. Providers can directly access the CEL for referrals.	Families have no access to the CEL.
Ventura		✓	Pre-packaged: Controltec, KinderWait.	Providers may submit family applications over the Internet to the R&R. Providers do not enter or update family information on the CEL. Providers will be able to directly access the CEL for referrals. ²	Families have no access to the CEL.

² As of March 2002, only the R&R agency in Ventura County had the ability to enter family data directly into the CEL. Other participating providers could not directly enter data, and were receiving referrals in paper form. Once MOUs are signed, these providers will be able to retrieve names directly from the CEL over the Internet.

CEL Flow

The degree of family and provider access allowed plays a large role in determining the nature of each CEL's key administrative steps and processes—from both the parent's and provider's perspective. We refer to these key steps and processes as the CEL flow. As pilot counties move further along in CEL implementation, we are able to secure a more detailed picture of CEL flow. In this section we provide three examples of CEL flow, specifically looking at the steps and processes with regard to: completing and submitting an application for subsidized child care; entering data from the application into the CEL; verifying a family's eligibility; referring families for an open child care slot; and enrolling and/or tracking an eligible child.

Kern County

In Kern County, families interested in subsidized child care may contact Centralized Child Care Information Services (CCCIS), which provides one-on-one counseling and assistance to families. CCCIS provides information on how child care subsidies work, what child care programs are available in the county, and the purpose of the CEL. CCCIS staff clearly states that the CEL is not a waiting list and that being included on the CEL does not guarantee that a family will ever receive a subsidy. CCCIS staff also stresses the advantages of the CEL—namely that a parent need apply only once. (CCCIS also provides information on what a family's ranking is once their application for care is received.)

To apply for subsidized child care, families can either apply over the phone with a CCCIS clerk or fill out a hard copy application form. The CCCIS clerk can enter a family's information directly into the CEL while s/he is on the phone with the parent. Alternatively, the CCCIS clerk can enter data into the CEL from a hard copy application mailed in by a parent or participating provider. The computer screens follow the application form to allow for a straightforward data entry process. All mailed applications are gathered and entered into the CEL on a daily basis by a CCCIS clerk. A CCCIS clerk is also responsible for a data cleaning process based on a daily report generated by the CEL. The daily report flags family data that appear incorrect, such as out-of-county zip codes.

A CCCIS clerk is responsible for investigating and rectifying incorrect data. While the corrections are still made manually, the daily CEL-generated report makes the data cleaning process much easier than it was in the past. With the old CEL system, a clerk had to manually scour the database for inconsistent or incorrect data, which proved to be an extremely time-consuming and tedious process. (For records that are purged from the CEL, the MIS specialist

has created a “Left CEL” status and a “Dead Area,” where parent information is archived at the end of each month.)

When a participating provider has an opening, a CCCIS clerk will query the CEL for families that meet the provider’s eligibility criteria (e.g., an infant in need of morning care). The CEL will then generate a list of infants in need of morning care in the order of the state-required priority rankings. Depending on the provider’s preference, referrals may occur in one of two ways. CCCIS may contact the parent about the opening and instruct the parent to call the provider. Alternatively, the provider with the opening can receive a list of five eligible families to contact. Families that are selected from the querying process are assigned the status code of “waiting.” The provider with the opening must update CCCIS on the status of the five referrals within ten working days. If ten working days have passed and the provider has not confirmed that a family was enrolled, the CEL automatically returns the family to an “active” status.

CCCIS has created a parent information fax sheet which includes important but unverified pre-enrollment information on a family and child in need of care. CCCIS faxes these information sheets to a provider when the provider wants to contact the referred families directly. Prior to being contacted by a provider, all families are informed of the documentation required for enrollment; CCCIS refers to this as the pre-verification process. However, once a provider and family are in contact, it is each provider’s responsibility to actually verify the relevant documents such as pay stubs and immunization records. Once a family is enrolled, the provider faxes CCCIS a parent enrollment form so that the CEL can track which children are eventually enrolled.

San Francisco County

Similar to Kern County, San Francisco County made a conscious decision to emphasize one-on-one counseling and assistance for families in need of subsidized care. Therefore, families do not directly interact with the CEL, but must instead go through a participating provider to apply for subsidized child care. San Francisco County’s assumption was that by requiring families to go through providers, families would better understand the CEL, their application forms would more likely be complete and accurate, and families could be referred to other social services as needed.

Providers enter and update family information directly into the CEL by logging on to the CEL web site. If a participating provider does not have Internet access, they forward hard copy applications to the Data Center Administrator, who then enters the data into the CEL.

The Data Center Administrator is responsible for maintaining the CEL database, troubleshooting database issues, and generating CEL reports.

When a provider has an opening, they log into the CEL web site, indicate that they have an opening, and ask to be shown eligible families after selecting the subsidy and limiting the query by age, if necessary. The CEL then displays a minimum amount of information for five eligible families—i.e., just enough information to confirm that these families meet the provider’s criteria. Families’ contact information is not displayed at this time. The provider can then ask the CEL to display the full family information for these five families, including contact information. The families are displayed in order of state-mandated priority.

At this point, an important additional process begins. When the full information for the five families is revealed, a letter is automatically generated to the five families, indicating that there may be an opening for them with a particular provider, and that the families may call the provider. This process of informing the families serves as a deterrent to providers retrieving more than five families at a time from the CEL in order to “pick and choose.” Since all families pulled from the CEL receive a letter, the assumption is that providers will want to avoid being flooded with phone calls from parents desperate for child care.

The five families retrieved from the CEL are tagged as “pre-enrolled” and the provider with the opening has five working days to contact these families. During these five days, no other provider with an opening can retrieve the same five families from the CEL. After five working days, the provider will return all unenrolled families back to a “waiting” status on the CEL, and update their contact information if necessary. Part of the Data Center Administrator’s job is to periodically search the database for families who have been tagged as “pre-enrolled” for more than five working days. In these cases, the Administrator will return them to a “waiting” status so the families do not miss any other potential opportunities for placement. The Data Center Administrator is also responsible for handling large requests from providers with multiple openings; specifically, these providers may require the referral of more than five families at a time per opening.

The five status markers of San Francisco County’s CEL are: pre-eligible (a family entered into the CEL but without verification materials, so that providers can not select them off the CEL); eligible (families whose eligibility has been verified and are ready for selection); pre-enrolled (families who have been drawn off the CEL by a provider with an opening); enrolled; and inactive (when families move away, or at least two different providers have made a certain number of unsuccessful contact attempts over a certain period of time).

Although families must provide eligibility verification information before they can be designated as “eligible” on the CEL, since providers are the ones audited, it is ultimately incumbent upon the enrolling agency to verify the family’s information and confirm that they are still eligible at the time of enrollment.

Glenn County

Parents in Glenn County may apply for subsidized child care in three ways. Parents may apply via a hard copy application (available at local providers, public agencies, and county functions), which is then mailed to the CEL Project Coordinator, who enters hard copy applications into the CEL on a regular basis. Parents may also submit their information over the phone if the Project Coordinator answers their call. Finally, parents may submit their application information over the Internet to the Project Coordinator. While families may apply via any Internet connection (e.g., at home), providers and a number of local partners (e.g., libraries) have also been trained to assist parents with submitting their information over the Internet. (All applications submitted over the Internet automatically feed into the CEL system.) At the time of application, families are asked to provide basic, unverified eligibility information. Once a family is entered into the CEL, the CEL Project Coordinator generates a letter to the family confirming that their information has been received. Because the County was concerned about the lack of personal contact inherent in an Internet-accessible CEL, this letter is intended to provide a measure of contact with families, and to confirm that the system is functioning.

When a provider has an opening, they call the Project Coordinator to request referrals. The Project Coordinator queries the CEL for families that meet the requirements of the program. Five referral families are generated in order of state-mandated priority. The Project Coordinator hand delivers the list of five referral families to the program with the opening. The referral families are placed on “waiting” status for two weeks, and during this time can not be referred to any other provider with an opening. Providers are responsible for contacting the referral families. Programs initially call families to confirm eligibility without stating that an opening exists. Only when an eligible family visits the program and confirms that they have the necessary documentation to enroll their child, does enrollment occur. The program with an opening is supposed to inform the Project Coordinator which referral families were enrolled and which ones were not. Once the Project Coordinator receives this information, she changes the enrolled child’s status from “waiting” to “enrolled,” and changes the other referred children’s status from “waiting” back to “active.” If two weeks have passed and the Project

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Coordinator has not been notified that a child was enrolled, the KinderWait system automatically returns the child back to “active” status.

The Project Coordinator is responsible for basic data cleaning processes—e.g., discovering inconsistencies in family data—since Glenn County’s KinderWait system does not generate a daily report of inconsistencies, as Kern County’s CEL system does. Controltec (the vendor) also has responsibilities for data cleaning and purging.

III. IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Throughout our evaluation, we have not only been documenting the key CEL features and processes as described in Chapter II, but also capturing pilot counties' unique *experiences* with CEL implementation—with the assumption that these experiences will not only help to explain county-specific progress and outcomes, but will also hold value for other counties grappling with CEL implementation efforts.

In this chapter we describe pilot counties' implementation challenges and lessons learned in several crucial areas, including the following: CEL design and planning; provider/community outreach and buy-in; interagency partnerships and agreements; family outreach and education; provider/stakeholder training; and data migration and management.¹ Before detailing challenges and successes in these specific areas, we must note that all counties encountered a significant, initial challenge that hindered their implementation progress—delays in executing their final contracts with the state. While the pilot counties were expecting to have their projects funded early in 2001, the earliest any pilot county had a fully executed contract was in June 2001. Four of the nine pilot counties had fully executed contracts by July 2001, three additional counties had fully executed contracts by November 2001, one additional county had its contract by February 2002, and the last county is still outstanding as of the writing of this report.

Despite the contract challenges, a number of pilot counties forged ahead with planning and/or early stages of implementation—in some cases because financial support had been garnered from other sources to sustain CEL efforts until pilot funds were available. However, many pilot counties were highly dependent on state funds, and were therefore forced to delay implementation tasks until their contracts with the state were executed. In some cases, counties had to postpone executing contracts with vendors, hiring staff, and purchasing necessary equipment. In one pilot county, delayed CEL implementation tasks meant that providers were not able to recruit enough families in time for the fall enrollment period. These types of initial obstacles and delays provide an important backdrop for the remaining challenges and lessons detailed in this chapter.

¹ This chapter draws heavily on our quarterly county and state reports.

CEL DESIGN AND PLANNING

Nearly all pilot counties have described challenges with regard to either administrative or technical design issues. On the administrative side, at least three pilot counties cited the difficulties of not having a full time position dedicated to the CEL project. Relying on various other staff members created a sizeable burden in some instances. Averting this challenge to some extent, San Francisco and Los Angeles Counties both hired CompuMentor—a technology consultant—to act as project manager for the CEL. On the technical side, over half of the pilot counties have discussed challenges they faced with regard to their working relationships with vendors and technical staff, which were a key ingredient of early stages of CEL design and planning. We discuss these technical design challenges in more detail below.

Technical Design Issues

Vendor/software selections were central to each individual county's CEL design and planning efforts. Counties chose either a pre-packaged or custom-made system; vendors/software were selected for a variety of reasons including: cost; use by other counties; technical capabilities; Internet capacity; and ability to interface with an existing database.

Pilot counties that experienced challenges working with vendors often found it difficult to communicate the county's needs, and how those needs and preferences should be reflected in the software design. For instance, one pilot county has continuously asserted its need for the CEL to have a parental preference field. Efforts to finalize this design issue with the vendor have been ongoing; the most recent attempt reflected parental preference by funding stream as opposed to by program name (i.e., program names that parents would be familiar with). Another pilot county observed that it would have been helpful and more efficient had the county (1) possessed a concrete picture ahead of time of the desired CEL system (in a technical sense), and (2) been able to articulate the specifics of preferred features to the vendor ahead of time. Some counties expressed that they were "at the mercy" of technical staff because of communication difficulties, and that it was crucial to work intensively with technical design staff early on to explicitly detail county needs and preferences.

A distinct but related technical issue concerned customization. Four counties chose pre-packaged systems for varied reasons, and while these systems allow for a certain degree of customization, the counties using these products have sometimes been challenged by the vendors' inability to make requested changes, or to implement the

customizations in a timely fashion. At least three counties raised the question of a vendor's commitment to customize the CEL software to each county's needs. One county specifically recommended a high level of specificity in contracts about vendors' obligation to customize the software and all related cost implications. For instance, one county explained that some of their desired features are not built into the KinderWait software, and that they will need to negotiate with the vendor on which customizations will be free of charge, which ones will require payment, and how much each customization will cost. Specific examples of the customization challenges and lessons cited by pilot counties are provided below.

- **Incorporating parental preferences.** From the start of its CEL pilot project, one county has asserted the need for parents to be able to select a preferred program on the CEL application; efforts to finalize this design issue with the vendor were eventually completed in December 2001.
- **Augmenting allotted space for comments.** The KinderWait product has a comments section where important supplementary information on families can be recorded. While this is a helpful field, the project coordinator in one county feels that five lines of space are too restrictive. This county requested a customization of this field in fall 2001, which has not yet been implemented.
- **Adding an annual income field.** In fall 2001, one county's hard copy CEL application was revised to include both monthly and annual income of families seeking subsidized care. This revision was made to accommodate the different eligibility requirements of participating providers. This county was hopeful that their vendor would add an annual income field to the web-based CEL application form by late January 2002. However, this task has yet to be completed as of March 2002. Additional income information is currently stored in the comments section.
- **Realizing flexibility through alpha fields.** Rather than expect their vendor to further customize their CEL software, one county expects to use alpha fields to insert a fair amount of information at their discretion (e.g., on family preferences). The county anticipates that they will use these alpha fields if/when they discover that the database does not incorporate all the elements that they desire. The county feels that alpha fields provide a degree of flexibility in their CEL database design.

While some of the counties that chose pre-packaged systems have been challenged by the restrictive nature, lack of customization, and timeliness of vendor response, counties with a custom-made product have had different experiences. For instance, Kern County's custom-made system was designed in-house, by a Kern County Superintendent of Schools' MIS specialist who had worked at length with the County's pre-existing SMP

CEL system. The preliminary experience of Kern County suggests that choosing a custom-made system and/or a system architect that has a pre-existing relationship with the county may be instrumental in avoiding or quickly resolving many design issues. For instance, in Kern County, due to the MIS specialist's pre-existing experience with earlier versions of the CEL, he was already familiar with many implementation challenges and avoidable pitfalls, and could clearly identify the key design features that the county wished to implement during the pilot period. The CEL technology could be easily customized to Kern County's unique experience and policy decisions, as opposed to CEL technology driving the County's experience and policy decisions. Some of the advantages of the "custom-made" counties are presented below.

- **A hands-on approach.** Having a CEL custom-made by a known local partner allowed for Fresno County to have a more "hands-on" approach with regard to system design. ISIS possesses strong knowledge of the community, and has collaborated with the County to design the CEL system. The County has observed that their unique relationship with ISIS gives them a more "hands-on" role in the development of the CEL system, rather than leaving all design decisions to programmers.
- **Rapid response time.** Having an in-house MIS specialist has been instrumental in meeting the needs of Kern County's CEL staff. When staff raises challenges with the CEL or brainstorms new ideas for making the CEL more effective, the necessary adjustments can be made in a very short period of time (days/weeks) by the MIS specialist. Delays in adding new fields or generating specific reports are not a problem due to this county's unique in-house capabilities.
- **Unique data cleaning processes.** Among the capabilities of Kern County's CEL is running an "exception report" at the end of every weekday. The computer scans the database for bad or incomplete data (e.g., children that have aged out) and then notifies appropriate staff with an automatic e-mail report.
- **"Extra" unique capabilities.** In Fresno County, one of the added advantages of selecting ISIS as the CEL architect was their potential for utilizing "extra" GIS system and data analysis capabilities. For instance, ISIS will be able to customize priority lists based on zip codes and Census blocks. ISIS will be able to illustrate through GIS mapping the rankings of families on the CEL and how they are distributed throughout the County.

PROVIDER/COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND BUY-IN

At the same time that many counties were still grappling with basic design issues, they were also addressing the need to secure community input and buy-in to the CEL.

Securing buy-in has proven to be a long process requiring continuous and multiple forms of contact. A high level of multi-layered community involvement in the *early* stages of planning and design has helped some counties to: allay providers' initial fears and concerns about CEL participation; facilitate provider recruitment; and sustain faith in and commitment to the pilot project, particularly during contract and work plan delays.

Pilot counties have discussed how their provider recruitment efforts were hindered to varying extents by providers' fears of losing control over their enrollment process as a result of CEL participation. Counties have found that providers may be reluctant to give up their lists to a pooled source because they feel that giving up data also means giving up control over whom they enroll. To address providers' reservations and increase their participation in the CEL, counties have employed a number of strategies, a number of which are described below.

- **Emphasize the CEL as an eligibility list.** Perceptions of the CEL as a waiting list tend to raise providers' fears about losing control over their enrollment process. Pilot counties emphasized the CEL as a pool of applicants from which providers could choose, and reminded providers that because they are the ones who are audited, they *must* be in charge of their own enrollment process.
- **Remind providers of the CEL's benefit to families and advocacy efforts.** Counties stressed that the CEL is designed not only to help providers, but also to assist families and to provide data that will support future child care advocacy efforts. Emphasizing these additional benefits has helped secure additional provider participation in the CEL.
- **Ask stakeholders early on what they need and want from the CEL.** As a result of soliciting provider input early in the CEL process, counties can feel more confident that the CEL system being designed and implemented will meet the approval of its users and facilitate a sense of shared ownership. For example, one county surveyed providers on what elements to include on the single application form. In another county, the vendor worked with providers to determine what they needed from the CEL interface—e.g., a drop-down menu of zip codes. And based on solicited stakeholder feedback, Kern County has chosen to continue with its single-point-of-entry CEL for the time being, despite the popularity of Internet-based CELs in other counties.
- **Clearly indicate the process for incorporating feedback.** Counties can assure providers and other stakeholders that their feedback is truly important by clearly indicating the scheduled dates for feedback and revision processes, and by providing an explanation when providers' concerns are *not* incorporated. San Francisco County noted that many of

their providers' reservations faded as the CEL design evolved and reflected providers' input.

- **Convene providers and other stakeholders early on and regularly to create a sense of trust and to facilitate relationship building.** Regular stakeholder meetings facilitate a greater understanding of the CEL, allow relationships to develop between providers and other key groups, and result in a greater willingness to share information among CEL participants.
- **Establish a providers subcommittee.** One county established such a subcommittee not only to allay fears and encourage buy-in, but also to help providers feel a sense of ownership of the CEL, rather than have them feel that a system is being imposed upon them.
- **Engage in continuous and multiple forms of provider outreach.** Because securing providers' buy-in to the CEL can be a long process, one county recommended that continuous and multiple strategies be employed, such as interviews, questionnaires, follow-up phone calls, provider planning sessions, and LPC meetings—where time is dedicated to explaining the CEL, answering questions from providers, and soliciting feedback and suggestions. Some of the issues pilot counties noted as important to incorporate into provider planning sessions were as follows: the type of CEL to establish; who would manage and have access to the CEL; how client information would be protected; and the types of outreach materials that should be developed and disseminated.
- **Use site visits rather than surveys to learn about providers' needs and unique circumstances.** Not only are site visits more conducive to relationship building, but they also may reveal more information than a survey could. For instance, one county pointed out that a site visit could reveal such challenges as providers having insufficient space or infrastructure for a computer and/or Internet connection.
- **Assess providers' comfort level and capacity to incorporate technology as a means of CEL participation.** Addressing providers' technology issues and concerns has assumed many forms. For instance, Solano County's plan called for the purchasing of necessary hardware for planned CEL participants/providers. At least two pilot counties have developed a technology needs survey to determine providers' capacity for an Internet-based system and to gauge any concerns related to technology. Other pilot counties are beginning discussions about how to build providers' technological capacity in the long term—e.g., working out high-speed Internet connections and troubleshooting computer problems.
- **Avoid a CEL membership/participation fee in order to increase provider buy-in.** Kern County found that the number of participating

providers grew in response to the cancellation of their CEL membership fee.

- **Pilot-test provider participation.** At least three counties decided to work with only a subgroup of their participating programs at the start of CEL implementation so that system bugs could be resolved before promoting the CEL to the broader community. One of the counties plans to convene this subgroup in order to secure their input on CEL experiences thus far, as well as their recommendations for improvement. The upgraded version of the CEL can then be used as an added selling point to recruit providers not yet participating.

The methods described above have been effective not only in allaying providers' concerns and securing their participation in CEL, but also in *sustaining* their commitment—particularly during contract and work plan delays. Some pilot counties have expressed frustration in sustaining momentum in their relationships with providers. Momentum wanes not only because of long delays in CEL implementation, but also because of a high turnover rate among providers' staff, which makes it necessary for counties to inform and convince a new generation of directors and staff. Given these challenges, some counties have engaged in “maintenance outreach,” whereby the county works to assure participating providers that CEL implementation really is going to occur. San Francisco County described how their early and considerable investment in securing provider buy-in has been critical to sustaining their CEL commitment even through contract and work plan delays. In particular, San Francisco County outlined the following strategies as integral to *lasting* buy-in from providers:

- **A highly visible process.** The CEL decision making process has been highly visible and public in San Francisco County. CEL decision making has been documented through LPC meeting agendas and minutes. The visibility of the process has been helpful in allaying participants' fears, because although the CEL is uncharted territory, participants know that there are always materials for them to review and people consistently available to answer questions.
- **Clearly marked decision points.** The points at which stakeholders can not turn back in the CEL process (without incurring cost) have been clearly communicated in San Francisco County. Clearly marking these decision points facilitated continuous “moments of *group* buy-in.”
- **Open and consistent communication.** The fact that San Francisco County held on-site interviews with providers and was always available to answer questions over the phone helped providers feel more secure about their ongoing commitment. Providers' questions were generally not

policy-oriented, but rather geared toward process issues—e.g., where the county was in the planning process, concerns about CEL procedures.

While other pilot counties have echoed the need for consistent and interpersonal communication with providers—particularly to hear concerns, answer questions, and ensure that providers feel comfortable about their participation—a number of counties have engaged in less interactive methods to involve providers, such as sending out CEL information packets. Furthermore, while many pilot counties stressed the advantages of engaging multiple stakeholders early in the CEL design and planning process, at least two counties described how involving too many stakeholders early on slowed down the process considerably and led to many decisions being revisited unnecessarily. Partially to prevent this type of slowdown, Glenn County had representation from multiple community agencies in the early stages of development, but once the early, “big picture” policy and design issues had been determined, the County reduced their CEL advisory committee down to five key members of the LPC that were intimately involved with the project and provided regular oversight to the CEL Project Coordinator.

INTERAGENCY PARTNERSHIPS AND AGREEMENTS

CEL participation agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) have been a primary tool for over half of the CEL pilot counties. For the most part, these agreements are intended to outline the general purpose and vision of CEL partnerships, and to specify the roles and responsibilities of those responsible for CEL management and those programs planning to use the CEL to enroll children. While this is the most common purpose for MOUs, some counties have also created MOUs between the fiscal agent, the R&R agency, and the LPC in order to further define CEL responsibilities and scope of work, and to specify how CEL funds will be distributed. MOUs have also been used to cover more specific areas of concern. For instance, the MOU in San Francisco between the LPC and participating providers has been an effective tool for detailing providers’ responsibility for the security of their own computer sites.

Through a group-learning question posed over email, pilot counties were asked to describe the key features of the MOUs they are using with participating agencies. County responses indicate that MOUs are generally straightforward in their terms. For instance, one county described the following key features of their MOU with participating agencies:

- Agencies agree not to maintain their own separate lists in addition to using the CEL;

- Agencies agree to participate in feedback processes such as surveys and meetings;
- Agencies agree to respect all confidentiality issues.

Another pilot county described their MOU with participating agencies as a “simple one-page agreement” that is supplemented by the expectations outlined in their Policies & Procedures (P&P) document. The partnership agreement states that the participating agencies will do the following:

- Provide program eligibility requirements;
- Forward all applications received;
- Provide information regarding child care space availability on a regular basis;
- Provide information on the status of referrals within ten working days of receipt of referral.

At least two counties have developed a P&P manual that elaborates on the expectations of CEL staff and participating agencies in order to provide a more comprehensive resource guide and to ensure that the information being given out to programs and families is consistent. For example, in order to assist all employees who interact with families and providers on a daily basis, Kern County developed a manual that documents CEL procedures and protocols (e.g., step-by-step instructions on data entry). In another pilot county, the P&P document covered the following broad categories of information: agency responsibility; initial data entry; placement of family on eligibility list; updating; reporting; ranking; referrals to centers; marketing strategy; confidentiality; and evaluation process.

The size and/or nature of a pilot county may help determine how necessary a tool the MOU proves to be. For example, large urban counties like Los Angeles may require a more formal partnership as evidenced by a MOU, while smaller, more rural counties might not need or desire a formal agreement with its programs. In Glenn County, all but three of the subsidized programs in the County fall under the umbrella of the Glenn County Office of Education; this intimate administrative arrangement has made a MOU unnecessary for the most part, although the County is in the process of drafting a MOU for the remaining three subsidized programs that are expected to participate in the later stages of implementation. As another relatively small, rural county, Butte County is certain that their community would not be receptive to the idea of a MOU, and expects

that agreements will need to depend to a greater extent on interpersonal interaction and trust.

Overall, a number of counties have found that MOUs not only secure and formalize participation agreements, but also create a valuable sense of shared ownership of the CEL. In addition, MOUs may address certain concerns that providers have about equity issues. In one county, a large number of providers withdrew from their planned CEL participation when it became apparent that other providers were planning to draw names from the CEL without adding any. The MOU in this county formally outlined the responsibilities of each participating program—namely that each provider must contribute their own records in order to draw any from the CEL. The MOU subsequently propelled all subsidized providers in the county to participate.

Having a MOU in place may also help address emerging challenges to CEL implementation. For example, San Mateo County did not have a MOU in place with its early partners and due to the high turnover rate of directors and staff in the County, the County needed to continuously reach out and inform a new generation of providers on the CEL's purpose and benefits. While the County did not create a MOU to directly address the issue of staff turnover, they found that the MOU could effectively increase accountability and provide a certain degree of continuity despite turnover.

As pilot counties are still in relatively early stages of implementation, it is not yet possible to say how effective MOUs have been as a whole, or whether or not the agreements have been modified over time to ensure that partnerships are working effectively and to address unanticipated challenges.

FAMILY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Family outreach and education has been an important component of pilot counties' CEL projects and has taken on various forms including the following: flyers with detachable CEL contact information; CEL flyers sent home with elementary school children; postcards to families requesting updated contact information; FAQ sheets available at the R&R agency; banners and billboards; CEL information booths at county fairs and other public gatherings; and televised Public Service Announcements (PSAs) designed to raise public awareness of the CEL. At least two counties are also planning web-based consumer information systems to better inform consumer choice about particular providers. However, despite the range of strategies listed above, many counties have not yet discussed their family outreach/education efforts in detail. At least two pilot

counties have purposely discontinued or delayed their efforts— either to ensure they had a more solid CEL infrastructure in place before soliciting community attention, or to avoid giving false hope to families seeking subsidized care through high-profile CEL announcements.

The following represent some of the challenges and lessons learned thus far from pilot counties' family outreach/education efforts:

- **Tailor family outreach strategies to the composition and distribution of the county population.** In more rural counties, mass communication strategies—such as newspaper advertisements and billboards—may not be as appropriate or effective as interpersonal contact—e.g., CEL booths at social events.
- **Families find it difficult to understand the difference between an eligibility list and a waiting list.** Interpersonal contact with families may be the only way to effectively detail this difference.
- **Purchasing airtime may be critical to a PSA's success.** While Kern County's PSA was aired on all local channels, the County did not purchase airtime. Therefore, stations aired the PSA during "off" hours when parents were not likely to be watching. The County has been disappointed by the response rates to the phone numbers listed by the PSA.
- **Utilize a range of community partners to reach families.** For instance, in Fresno County, Human Services has agreed to assist in the dissemination of CEL information to families throughout their Fresno County offices. The County hopes that each Human Services location can also house a computer for CEL use.
- **Postcards may be inexpensive but ineffective.** While postcards sent in bulk are often the least expensive method of securing updated family contact information, they are not always the most effective. In particular, one county found it necessary to follow up with phone calls. In addition, many of the postcards were not forwarded to new mailing addresses.

In addition to employing some of the discrete strategies above, Kern County has deliberately incorporated family outreach and education into the CEL process itself, as its CEL is based on a customer service and education model. CEL staff provides a great deal of information to families seeking child care when they call a centralized number. In particular, the County provides families with information on how subsidies work and what child care programs are available. For parents who appear unwilling to be placed into the CEL, staff educates them on the CEL's advantages for parents—namely, that a

parent need apply only once. Staff may also explain to parents how the CEL will provide valuable child care data to legislators. Though Kern County CEL staff describes the advantages of the CEL, the County is also careful to tell parents that the CEL is not a waiting list, and that being included on the list does not guarantee that a family will ever receive a subsidy. Similar to Kern County, San Francisco County has also deliberately chosen a customer education model in that families are required to come in to a provider to apply for care. The assumption behind this approach is that families will be more effectively educated about the CEL, and can be informed about other social services, if necessary.

PROVIDER/STAKEHOLDER TRAINING

Training involves educating local stakeholders (e.g., providers, community-based organizations) on such topics as the CEL's larger purpose, its specific functions and processes, and data entry requirements. While the first demonstration trainings were general in nature and targeted toward marketing the CEL technology to the LPC or other decision makers, subsequent trainings have been targeted to key CEL staff or individual providers that would have access to the CEL. For example, in Glenn County, staff has been trained on data entry guidelines and specifications, and the CEL Project Coordinator has trained many community agencies, such as libraries and schools, on how to help families properly submit their information over the Internet. In San Francisco County, the kickoff meeting served as a precursor to training, in that participating providers were afforded the opportunity to view the screens for the CEL database web site and to review the P&P manual. After the kickoff meeting, CompuMentor planned to schedule visits to each participating provider in San Francisco for more formalized, one-on-one training (e.g., to ensure their access the CEL web site, to review the P&P manual, and to answer specific questions).

Though provider/stakeholder training is a crucial step of the CEL implementation process, too few pilot counties have discussed this step in detail in order for us to present key challenges and lessons here.

DATA MIGRATION AND MANAGEMENT

As a major CEL implementation task, data migration may involve a number of different processes. For instance, data migration may involve transferring or merging providers' individual lists (either in hard copy or electronic form) to the CEL; writing intermediate databases where pre-existing data can be cleaned or updated before being

transferred to the CEL; transferring the data on an older centralized system to the new CEL system; or entering data manually from pre-existing lists.

Migrating providers' individual lists into the CEL has proven to be one of the most significant and challenging steps of CEL implementation. Pilot counties described many specific experienced and anticipated challenges with regard to data migration as well as data management—several of which are concerned with the time-intensive nature of the tasks at hand. These data migration and management challenges are described below.

- **Time-consuming nature of data migration and management tasks.** The data migration process required many time-intensive tasks and transitions: (1) for counties with a majority of providers' lists in hard copy format, transferring those providers' lists into the CEL can be a time-consuming challenge; (2) during the transition period between an old centralized system and a new CEL system, counties may find it necessary to engage in time-intensive double data entry—entering information on both the old and new systems until the new system is fully functional; (3) one pilot county's delays in having the vendor design a parental preference field on the CEL software—which would allow parents to specify what type of child care they prefer—translated to an inefficient use of staff time for data management. Without the parental preference field being incorporated into the CEL design upfront, staff in this county had to match families with preferred providers by memory, or by sifting through family data.
- **Differences in SMP and KinderWait data collection.** One county anticipated challenges in migrating existing SMP data to the KinderWait system because the two systems collect data differently. For instance, with the SMP system, it is not a problem if the individual incomes of family members do not add up to the listed overall family income. However, this mismatch is not acceptable on the new system. Counties may not have collected enough family data under the SMP system to make a clean transfer to KinderWait.
- **Filtering out served families.** Pre-existing databases may include families currently being served as well as families waiting for placement. The former group of families needs to be queried off in order to move the “actively waiting” list to the new software system.
- **Different pre-CEL family rankings.** Families may have different rankings at different agencies because of a change in income. It is unclear whether counties transitioning these families to the CEL should handle those cases based on where the family first applied, or based on where they reported the most recent level of income.

III. Implementation Challenges and Lessons Learned

- **Providers maintaining duplicate lists.** In some counties, many programs may maintain their own lists of families *in addition* to referring those same families to the CEL. Few families may be willing to rely exclusively on the CEL. One county described how this duplicate list challenge is further confused by uncertainty about whether contracted child care providers must continue to maintain their own lists while participating in the CEL.
- **Managing the priorities of families with unsatisfied preferences.** One anticipated data management challenge is managing the priorities of families who are currently being served, but not by their preferred provider. While these families may continue to wait for alternate care on the CEL, it is unclear what their priority should be in relation to families with lower state-mandated priority who are not being served at all.
- **Forecasting family needs.** Some counties are trying to ensure that CEL systems can collect and track detailed enough information about families to forecast children's need for care. For instance, if a child is about to reach the maximum age for her placement, the CEL system should ideally be able to "alert" the county to begin looking for alternate arrangements. Managing such program-to-program transfers is an anticipated data management challenge.

In addition to challenges, pilot counties also shared lessons and best practices with regard to data migration and management. As might be expected given the challenges cited above, a number of these insights are concerned with reducing the time-intensive nature of data related tasks.

- **Manually entering data into the CEL may be the most efficient process.** At least three counties discovered that it would have been more efficient to manually enter data into the CEL rather than—for example—create programs to fold SMP data into the CEL, or write intermediate databases. In one county, the electronically transferred lists had a great deal of duplication and it was necessary to manually remove identical records. San Francisco County determined that only two or three of its providers' individual lists were large enough to warrant writing programs for electronic conversion.
- **Use an intermediate database to address different data collection requirements.** San Francisco County chose to enter providers' lists into an intermediate Access database before migrating them to the CEL database. These lists are being moved to Access as a preliminary step because not all providers are collecting all the information required by the CEL. Once the lists are moved to Access, the county can auto-populate blank fields in order to facilitate data sorting and the completion of incomplete data.

- **It may be more efficient to delay the updating and purging of data until after securing all providers' input.** In one county, the initial plan was to clean data before transferring it to the new CEL system. However, the county decided to delay this process until after an upcoming providers meeting, where providers would likely request that the county collect additional or revised elements of family data. The county has decided to wait to do a full and complete update and purge all at once—including updating the standardized data elements and incorporating providers' requests for additional family data elements.
- **The duplication rate may be lower in more rural counties.** Anecdotal evidence from one county suggests that a low duplication rate of family records in more rural counties may be due to the fact that providers are located relatively far apart from one another.
- **Combat incomplete information by using a special category designation.** In one county, where families have been submitting their own information for the CEL over the Internet, any incomplete entries are sent to a "special category" that is reviewed weekly by a project coordinator, who then contacts the family and completes the application process over the phone. This process has been helpful and has allowed for families to be entered into the CEL that might have otherwise been ignored as "bad data."

While pilot counties have shared data migration/management challenges and preliminary best practices, it is still too early for counties to share insights about the data migration process as a whole, or about key findings from the data migration process (e.g., the duplication rate among individual providers' lists).

Though preliminary in nature, the challenges, lessons, and best practices described in this chapter as a whole have provided a detailed view of implementation progress across pilot counties, and have provided valuable clues for other counties embarking on their own CEL planning and implementation efforts. In the next chapter we turn our attention from those who plan and administer CELs, to those who are the expected beneficiaries of CELs. Specifically, in Chapter IV we examine preliminary findings on CEL family characteristics.

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IV. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CEL FAMILIES

SPR has used two main sources of quantitative data for examining the characteristics and experiences of families applying for subsidized care: administrative data and data collected through surveys. For this report, these data provide a baseline, or starting point to 1) characterize the nature of CEL systems and the families who use them, and 2) examine the way the development of CELs affects families in need of subsidized child care.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

The California Department of Education adopted the recommendations of the Quality Child Care Initiative to ensure some uniformity in the way counties' CELs were maintained and the data elements that should be captured for applicant families. Pursuant to this, each CEL county is to make quarterly electronic submissions to the state of data for each individual child on the eligibility list, including:

- Characteristics of the child's family, including the family's zip code of residence, gross monthly income, size, and whether the family could be classified as a migrant worker or teen parent.
- Characteristics of the child, including the child's birth date, whether the child is enrolled in Head Start, and whether the child has special needs (e.g., is an infant, was served by Child Protective Services, or has other special needs).
- Characteristics of the service being requested, including the reasons the family needed service, the application date, whether full-time or part-time care was requested, and whether care was needed for evenings or weekends.

The state has agreed to forward these submissions to us, to support our evaluation effort. These administrative data will be used to describe the population of children needing subsidized child care and their families.

CEL Data Submitted to Date

As pilot counties have begun to convert to CEL systems, the administrative data have started to become available. In July 2001, two counties, Kern and San Mateo, submitted information from their databases. A quarter later, in October 2001, four counties submitted, including Glenn, Kern, San Mateo, and Ventura. For the most recent quarter, January 2002, we have thus far received data for only two counties, Kern and San

IV. Preliminary Findings on the Characteristics of CEL Families

Mateo. Because the data submission for October 2001 covered the most counties, these data will be summarized here.

Before proceeding, however, we note an important caveat—although the CEL systems have been established in these four counties, not all relevant providers are necessarily being included. This limitation occurs primarily because counties have been adding providers to their CEL database gradually, as the county’s implementation proceeds. Moreover, apparently a few providers have declined to join the CEL. Consequently, the results that follow should not be interpreted necessarily as reflecting the characteristics of all applicant families.¹

Characteristics of Children and Families

The four counties noted above submitted a combined total of 13,013 records for the month of October 2001. This figure represents the total number of children on the counties’ CEL at the end of the reporting period. However, many families submitted an application for subsidized care for more than one child. Indeed, the 13,013 children were drawn from only 7,125 families, yielding an average of approximately 1.8 children per applicant family. When broken out by the separate counties, the October data can be described as follows:

Exhibit IV-1: Number of CEL Children and Families

County	# of Children	# of Families	Children per Family
Glenn	371	263	1.41
Kern	6,894	3,440	2.00
San Mateo	2,771	1,761 ²	1.57
Ventura	<u>2,977</u>	<u>1,661</u>	<u>1.79</u>
TOTALS	13,013	7,125	1.83

¹ An additional problem was that there were a few duplicate names in the file. However, this problem was relatively minor, as only 22 (or .17%) of the child identifiers were repeated. Additionally, there were 48 records with missing child identifiers.

² In San Mateo, these figures include 16 children from 11 families that lived in other counties—mainly Alameda, Santa Clara, and San Francisco Counties.

Exhibit IV-2 reports additional characteristics of families. As the table shows, 48% (or 3,388 families of the total of 7,125 families) had one child on the list, 32% had two children, 14% had three children, and 7% had four children or more. Their monthly income levels underscore these families' need for subsidized services. Thus, 29% reported a monthly gross income of less than \$1,000, for an annualized income of under \$12,000. At the other extreme, about 9% reported an income of more than \$2,500 per month (or an annualized income of \$30,000 per year).

The extent of need for services can be expressed more directly. The Child Development Division of the California Department of Education has established a priority order for child care services. Children who are referred by Child Protective Services are served first. Thereafter, families with the lower gross monthly income in relation to family size are given higher priority. These income priorities are displayed in a Admissions Priorities Chart, indicating, for each family size, the maximum monthly income that a family could record to remain at a given priority rank. The table displays 66 rank categories; the lower the rank, the higher the priority for services.

We used data on family size and gross monthly income from the CEL submissions to characterize each of the families represented in the data with respect to their priority status. Exhibit IV-2 summarizes these results and shows that about 10% of families can be assigned rank 1, the highest priority grouping. No other single ranking represented as many of the families. However, substantial proportions were at each of the subsequent rank categories until about rank 40. For example, about 12% receive ranks 2 through 10, and about 20% (plus or minus three percentage points) are in each of the groups defined by ranks 11 through 20, 21 through 30, and 31 through 40. The distribution begins to fall for ranks greater than this.

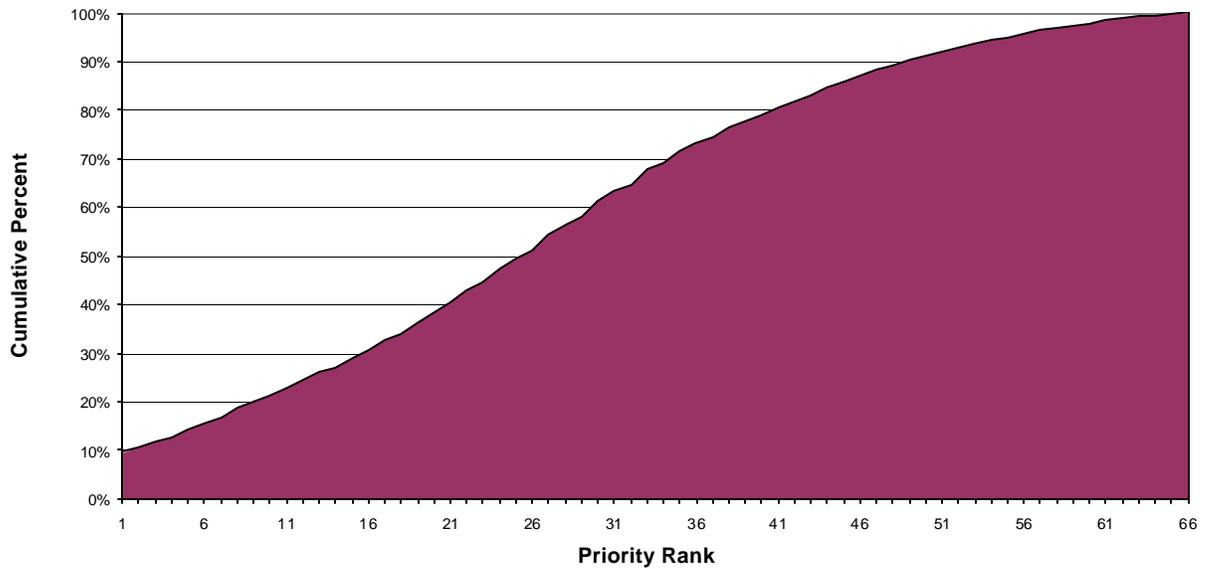
Exhibit IV-3 displays this graphically. Consistent with the results just described, the trend line showing the cumulative percentage of families on the CEL rises sharply and steadily through about rank 40, when the line begins to flatten out.

Exhibit IV-2: Characteristics of Families on the CEL

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Total number of families	7,125	100%
Number of Applicant Children per Family		
Families w/ 1 child on the list	3,388	47.6%
Families w/ 2 children on the list	2,248	31.6%
Families w/ 3 children on the list	1,010	14.2%
Families w/ 4 or more children on list	479	6.7%
Monthly Family Income		
Less than \$1,000	2,090	29.4%
\$1,000 to 1,499	1,863	26.2%
\$1,500 to 1,999	1,497	21.0%
\$2,000 to 2,499	1,014	14.2%
\$2,500 to 3,249	565	7.9%
\$3,250 or more	90	1.3%
Priority Rank for Services		
Rank of 1 (highest priority)	672	9.6%
Ranks 2 to 5	339	4.8%
Ranks 6 to 10	469	6.7%
Ranks 11 to 20	1220	17.4%
Ranks 21 to 30	1600	22.8%
Ranks 31 to 40	1242	17.7%
Ranks 41 to 50	845	12.1%
Ranks 51 to 66	621	8.9%

Note: Some families are missing on some data elements; percents are calculated based on families with non-missing data. The number and percent of families at various priority ranks for services were calculated based on threshold gross family incomes for families of different sizes, based on the Admissions Priorities Chart developed by the Child Development Division.

Exhibit IV-3: Cumulative Percent of Families by Rank



In a subsequent report, as more CEL data become available, we can exploit these data still further, by examining changes over time in the composition or size of the lists. Similarly, we can calculate the rate at which families with different priority rankings exit from the list. This will suggest whether families with a lower rank exit the list faster (e.g., from one quarter to the next) than do families with a higher rank, as they would be expected to.

In this report, however, we continue to draw on the CEL data in presenting characteristics of the 13,013 children represented on the list. These results are shown in Exhibit IV-4. As the table shows, the majority of children needing care are pre-school age. Thus, 7% are under one year of age, and another 44% are ages 1 through 4. However, appreciable numbers are older, with about 13% ages 11 through 14. The average age of children on the CEL was six.

Exhibit IV-4 also shows other characteristics of children that relate to their need for services. These data indicate that very few children are denoted as having special needs. For example, only about 3% are defined as having a special need by virtue of being an infant, almost none had been served by Child Protective Services, and less than 1% are denoted as having other exceptional needs.

Elsewhere, the table shows the schedule for care that is being requested. According to these results, very small numbers needed evening or weekend care.

Exhibit IV-4: Characteristics of Children on the CEL

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Total number of children on the list	13,013	100%
Age of Children		
Less than 1 year old	915	7.1%
Ages 1 or 2	2,882	22.3
Ages 3 or 4	2,756	21.3
Ages 5 or 6	2,039	15.8
Ages 7 or 8	1,530	11.8
Ages 9 or 10	1,139	8.8
Ages 11 or 12	742	5.7
Ages 13 or 14	914	7.1
Children with Special Needs		
Child is an infant	373	2.9%
Child was served by CPS	31	0.2%
Child has other exceptional needs	100	0.8%
Schedule Requested		
Evening	97	1.3%
Weekend	121	1.7%
<small>Note: Some children are missing on some data elements; percents are calculated based on children with non-missing data. San Mateo County did not submit information regarding the requested schedule for child care.</small>		

Challenges to Address

While it is promising that the CEL pilot counties have begun to submit data from their management information systems, a few key issues should probably be addressed:

- **Data submission format.** While the CEL database systems may be doing an admirable job in caseload management, inconsistencies in the way the electronic files were provided make it difficult to use the data for evaluation across counties. For example, data were submitted to the state in various formats, including as Access databases or Excel spreadsheets,

and the various fields were submitted in different orders by the various counties. These inconsistencies made merging the data from the separate counties into one master database exceedingly difficult.

- **Pseudo-identifiers.** The child and family identifiers used by each county are unique within the county. Thus, it is not possible to examine whether the same families or children may be turning up on more than one county's CEL system.
- **Uniform terminology.** Although counties may have a good understanding of what the information in their own data systems means, the same term may have different meanings, or may be understood differently in each of the counties. This occurs because some key terms in the data dictionary are not provided a standard definition. For example, it is not clear that all counties mean the same thing when they label a child as having an exceptional need. Although this lack of standardization may give counties some welcomed flexibility, it also makes it difficult to interpret the data consistently on a cross-county basis.
- **Garbage data and missing data.** Counties have been working to conform their systems to the standard reporting guidelines issued by the state, but coding or keypunch errors remain and missing information is widespread. Thus, some of the counties do not report data on all of the required fields, or report data for only some applicant families. In addition, we encountered out of range values, such as birth dates that do not make sense (e.g., 04/01/2096 or 12/01/2688).
- **More frequent data.** In order to track applications to the CEL system, it would be helpful to have more frequent data submissions from sites that have systems in place.

THE FIRST ROUND OF THE FAMILY SURVEY

To complement the MIS data, SPR will be conducting two rounds of a survey of families who have applied for subsidized child care. The survey instrument was drafted, shared with the CEL Advisory Group, finalized, and translated into Spanish in late spring/early summer 2001. The intent is to administer the survey to a sample of families waiting for care during the evaluation's baseline period, and to another sample of families waiting for care approximately one year later.³ This survey will provide another opportunity for us to characterize families and children in need of subsidized care, and, in particular, to learn how those applying for care heard about the availability of subsidized care, how they applied, what information they were provided when they applied, and how

³ The sample of families surveyed may include families that have received care by the time the survey is administered.

well they felt they were treated. Appendix A of this report includes a copy of the master survey instrument.

Data Collection

As of the writing of this report, the first round of the survey has been administered and the results have been tabulated. We pursued two strategies in developing the sampling frame for this first round. First, from each of the six participating counties that were not classified as a CEL county by the time the survey was administered, we randomly selected five providers that were listed as proposed participants of the county's CEL. We asked each of these providers to send us the names of families who had been added to their list between the dates of February 1 and April 30, 2001, along with families' contact information. We randomly selected 100 families per county from these lists, with the number selected from each provider proportionate to the size of that provider's list relative to the other four providers we had selected from that county.⁴ This strategy was intended to yield a sample of 600 families in total for these six counties.

We encountered two major challenges in drawing the sample in this way; these challenges were the following:

- **Time-intensive nature of securing providers' individual lists.** It required considerably more time than anticipated (over two months) to secure the individual lists of family data from providers. A number of factors contributed to this situation, including: providers' reluctance to respond to SPR's request, providers' severely limited time to respond to SPR's request, confusion about which staff persons would need to approve the data sharing, and staff turnover in the counties that made it necessary to renegotiate the data sharing arrangement.
- **Privacy concerns.** Citing privacy concerns, many providers were unwilling to share family contact information. In these cases, we convinced the providers to draw the sample and conduct the mailing of the survey on our behalf.

The strategy for drawing the sample just described was pursued in six of the nine pilot counties. In the three other counties—Solano, Kern, and San Mateo—the CEL had already been implemented, at least to some degree. Accordingly, a consolidated list of

⁴ We decided to administer an equal number of surveys to each pilot county in order to facilitate inter-county comparisons. The alternative would have been to draw the sample proportional to the size of each county's waiting lists, but in this case, the survey results would have been heavily skewed towards Los Angeles County, the largest pilot county by far.

applicant families was available, obviating the need for us to contact individual providers for families' names. In each of these three counties, we randomly selected 100 families' names directly from the CEL (from the same time frame, February 1—April 30), for a total of 300 additional families. As one would expect, sampling proceeded much more smoothly in these three counties.

The first major wave of surveys was mailed from SPR on July 17. This wave included both direct-mails to the randomly selected applicant families, as well as packages of surveys that we mailed to those providers who were mailing the survey to families on our behalf. For the direct-mails, we attempted to boost response rates by sending out reminder postcards approximately one week after the initial mailing, and mailing a duplicate version of the survey three weeks after that to non-respondents. Providers that were mailing the survey on our behalf were asked to follow a similar sequence, but obviously in these cases, we had much less control over the mailing and follow-up processes.

Two pilot counties, Los Angeles and Fresno, lagged significantly behind the others in terms of survey administration. Both were delayed due to significant challenges in securing providers' individual lists and addressing their privacy concerns. In Los Angeles, surveys were administered in August and September, and in Fresno they were administered in September (all through the providers themselves). In addition to these two counties, two *individual providers* in Butte and Glenn Counties lagged significantly behind in survey administration. Indeed, no data have ever been received from these two providers.⁵ Ten surveys were distributed to the Butte provider, and 25 were distributed to the Glenn provider.

In total, 887 surveys were mailed.⁶ Of these, we have received and processed 308 completed surveys, representing a response rate of approximately 35%.⁷ Exhibit IV-5

⁵ These situations were caused by a number of factors. For instance, at the Glenn County provider, a key staff member quit his job sometime after agreeing to oversee the mailing of surveys. A substitute staff member could not be identified, and the program was unsure that it wanted to participate after all.

⁶ Thus, 887 surveys were mailed out of the 900 that had been planned. This small shortage occurred because not all counties had 100 applicants during the specified time frame. For instance, Solano County could only provide a list of 89 names. In addition, some individuals asked to be removed from the study (e.g., because it did not apply to them), a few duplicate names were discovered and removed, and one of the survey recipients was removed because she was employed by a key agency involved in that county's CEL.

⁷ A few additional completed surveys have since been received but are not included in these tallies or the analysis that follows. Additionally, a total of 59 of the surveys that were mailed out (approximately 7% of the total) were returned to SPR by the post office as undeliverable or because the family had moved without leaving a forwarding address.

indicates the number of responses, as well as the response rate, by pilot county. San Mateo County enjoyed the highest number of responses and response rate, with 47 of its 100 surveys returned. Fresno had the smallest number of responses and a response rate of 22%.

Exhibit IV-5: Survey Response by County

County	Number of Responses	County Response Rate	Percentage of All Returned
Butte	30	30%	9.7%
Fresno	22	22%	7.1%
Glenn	34	34%	11.0%
Kern	39	39%	12.7%
Los Angeles	41	41%	13.3%
San Francisco	28	28%	9.1%
San Mateo	47	47%	15.3%
Solano	38	43%	12.3%
Ventura	29	29%	9.4%
TOTAL	308		100.0%

Descriptive Statistics from the Survey

In the following tables we detail the responses to the survey questions from pilot counties as a whole.⁸

1. WHERE DID YOU FIRST HEAR ABOUT APPLYING FOR PUBLICLY FUNDED CHILD CARE?

The response to this question seems to indicate that knowledge of publicly funded child care spreads by word of mouth, from family members, friends, and neighbors (62%).⁹ Other common sources were from a child-care provider (29%) or social service agency (26%).¹⁰ As more counties move toward full CEL implementation, different

⁸ These tabulations should be interpreted as representing the responses in the “average” county (as opposed to representing the responses of the average family in the counties as a whole). This interpretation follows because we drew the sample to include an equal number of families per county. Further, we weighted each county to adjust for their varying response rates, so that each county would count equally in the tabulations. Except where indicated otherwise, the percentages shown in the tabulations that follow were calculated after excluding the generally small proportions that did not respond to a given question. These non-responses vary from about 2% to 12% (of the total number of respondents).

⁹ The possible answers to this question (and others) are not mutually exclusive; families could choose as many that applied.

¹⁰ San Mateo stands out in that a much higher proportion (55%) of the families from this county that responded cited a social service agency as a source of information.

marketing methods may be utilized, thus affecting where families learn about publicly funded child care.

Source	Yes	No	No Response
From a friend, family member, or neighbor.	62%	18%	20%
From a child care provider where I wanted to enroll my children.	29%	40%	31%
From a social welfare department, child protective services, or other public agency.	26%	40%	34%
From a newspaper, radio, or television.	5%	58%	37%
From a church, library, school, or another community organization.	11%	53%	36%

2. HOW DID YOU PUT YOUR NAME ON THE LIST(S)?

Overwhelmingly, families apply directly to the R&R agency, though appreciable numbers (45%) apply directly to the provider. None of the survey respondents indicated that they had used the Internet to add their name to a list. As CELs develop, particularly those that allow for parental access, Internet usage should increase among parents applying for subsidized care.

Source	Yes	No	No Response
I applied directly to the provider.	45%	34%	21%
I applied to the R&R agency. ¹¹	67%	19%	14%
I applied through an Internet web site.	0%	72%	28%

¹¹ The survey instrument was tailored to each pilot county so that the actual names of the R&R agencies were listed.

2A. IF YOU APPLIED DIRECTLY TO THE PROVIDERS, HOW MANY DID YOU APPLY TO?

This question attempts to assess the amount of difficulty families may go through in applying for publicly funded child care at multiple sites. Of the persons who indicated that they applied directly to the provider(s), 107 responded to this follow-up question. Of the 107, the largest percentage of families applied at only one provider. This could be due to several factors, including that families are only interested in one provider, that they are only aware of one provider, or that they are unwilling or unable to travel to other providers.

Providers	
One provider	65%
Two providers	16%
Three providers	7%
Four or more providers	12%

3. WHEN YOU PUT YOUR NAME ON THE LIST(S), DID YOU NEED PUBLICLY FUNDED CHILD CARE IMMEDIATELY?

A large majority of respondents indicated that when they applied for publicly funded child care, they needed services immediately.

Immediately	
Yes	78%
No	22%

4. WHEN YOU PUT YOUR NAME ON THE LIST(S), DID YOU THINK YOUR NAME AND INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CHILD CARE NEEDS WOULD BE SHARED WITH OTHER PROVIDERS?

Most respondents did not think their information would be shared with other providers. In none of the counties did a majority of families believe that their information would be shared with other providers.

Response	
Yes	34%
No	66%

5. WHEN YOU PUT YOUR NAME ON THE LIST(S), HOW LIKELY DID YOU THINK IT WAS THAT YOU WOULD RECEIVE PUBLICLY FUNDED CHILD CARE?

Approximately 76% of respondents felt that it was somewhat or very likely that they would receive publicly funded child care.

<u>Likelihood</u>	<u>Response</u>
Very likely	31%
Somewhat likely	46%
Unlikely	24%

6. HOW DO YOU THINK THE LIST WORKS?

Well over half of the respondents believe that income level, or income level *and* length of wait time, determines whether they will receive subsidized care. Substantial numbers (about 25%) do not know what determines priority for access.

	<u>Response</u>
Wait long enough	10%
Income level	29%
Income level and length of time	27%
Other things	9%
I don't know	25%

7. PLEASE INDICATE IF YOU RECEIVED THE INFORMATION BELOW, EITHER IN WRITTEN OR VERBAL FORM, WHEN YOU GOT ON THE LIST(S).

The survey asks respondents what types of information they received when they were placed on the list. Results shows that customers are apparently not very well informed of the circumstances surrounding their waiting status. Among the factors about which respondents received the most information, only just over half reported that they were told whether their family was eligible for subsidized care and just under half were told about the types of care available to them. Fewer were knowledgeable about their chances of getting publicly funded care (41%), the reasons why they might be eligible (41%), how long they might have to wait (41%), and how to update information about their personal circumstances (35%).

IV. Preliminary Findings on the Characteristics of CEL Families

Information	Yes	No	Unsure
Whether my family is eligible for receiving publicly funded child care.	55%	29%	16%
The types of child care that are available.	44%	44%	12%
My family's chances of getting publicly funded child care.	41%	42%	16%
The reasons why my family is eligible for getting publicly funded child care.	41%	42%	17%
How long my family might have to wait for publicly funded child care.	37%	47%	15%
How to update family information on the list.	35%	46%	20%

8. PLEASE INDICATE HOW MUCH YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

This series of questions attempts to assess families' interactions with providers and R&R agencies. Their responses paint a fairly positive picture of the quality of the services they received and of their interactions. For example, in an overwhelmingly strong affirmation of service quality, 87% of families strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement that they were treated with respect by the organization they contacted to receive subsidized care. A majority felt that the organization they contacted (1) did their best to help them understand the types of care that were available (68% somewhat or strongly agreed with this statement), and (2) gave them a good idea of their chances of getting care (68%). Strong majorities also felt that the organization they contacted understood when their family needed child care (62%) and could be trusted to do their best to help them (62%). In the weakest response, only 40% agreed that the organization they contacted helped them plan their child care needs.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
I was treated with respect by the organization I contacted to get care.	63%	24%	9%	4%
They did their best to help me understand the types of child care that was available.	39%	29%	16%	17%
I have / had a good idea of my chances of getting child care.	28%	40%	15%	17%

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
The organization understood when my family needed child care.	42%	20%	17%	22%
I trust them to do whatever they can to help my family get child care.	41%	21%	17%	21%
The organization I contacted helped me plan for my child care needs.	24%	16%	16%	43%

9. HOW MANY ADULTS ARE IN YOUR FAMILY AND LIVING IN THE SAME HOME?

A final series of questions asks the respondent about the family’s circumstances and its reasons for needing care. To begin with, a majority of the families responding have two or more adults living in the household. This should include two parent families, parent and grandparent, and other family structures.

Adults	
One adult	38%
Two adults	48%
Three or more adults	15%

10. WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT MONTHLY INCOME?

In an overall sense mirroring results from the CEL data reported earlier in this chapter, a substantial proportion of families—about 59%—reported less than \$1,500 in monthly income, for an annualized income of less than \$18,000. Relatively few families (about 8%) had monthly incomes above \$2,500.

Income	
Less than \$1,000	20%
\$1,001-\$1,500	39%
\$1,501-\$2,000	22%
\$2,001-\$2,500	12%
\$2,501-\$3,250	5%
More than \$3,250	3%

11. ARE YOU A CALWORKS PARTICIPANT?

Only 10% of families reported being CalWORKs participants. This is likely due to the fact that CalWORKs participants receive subsidized care through specialized channels. The free response area of the survey (that has yet to be quantified) hints at a resentment of CalWORKs participants from the working poor/non- CalWORKs participants.

Cal WORKS	
Yes	10%
No	90%

12. WHAT ARE THE REASONS YOUR FAMILY NEEDS CHILD CARE?

This question attempts to address the range of possible reasons that a family would need publicly funded child care. In answering this question, families were asked to check all reasons that apply. Responses indicate that there are two main reasons that families are applying for publicly funded child care. The first reason is that the adult(s) in the family are working full-time; most (76%) of the respondents identified this as a reason. The second main reason is that respondents feel that their children will benefit from child care; a majority (55%) of respondents gave this reason. Other reasons mentioned were much less prevalent, including that the adult(s) were looking for work or undertaking education or training.

Reasons for Needing Child Care	
Adult(s) working full-time.	76%
Adult(s) working part-time.	20%
Adult(s) looking for work.	20%
Adult(s) receiving education or training.	24%
Adult(s) looking for housing.	9%
Child(ren) have special needs.	10%
Child(ren) will benefit from child care.	55%

13. WHICH IS THE MOST IMPORTANT REASON FOR NEEDING CHILD CARE?

When asked about the *most important* reason for applying for publicly funded child care, again respondents indicated that working full-time was the main concern, with 61% of respondents giving this answer.

Most Important Reason	
Adult(s) working full-time.	61%
Adult(s) working part-time.	5%
Adult(s) looking for work.	7%
Adult(s) receiving education or training.	11%
Adult(s) looking for housing.	1%
Child(ren) have special needs.	1%
Child(ren) will benefit from child care.	10%
Other	4%

14. AGES AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN

The survey indicates that the total number of respondents' children under 19 years of age is 646. Most of the survey respondents (67%) have only one to two children. The children's age group most frequently represented in the survey was 0 to 4 years of age. There are a total of 351 (or 54% of 646) children 0 to 4 years of age. The following chart represents the distribution of children by age groups.

Age Range	# of Children
0-4	351
5-12	235
13-18	60
TOTAL	646

Differences Between Counties of Different Types

As part of the evaluation design, we plan on administering the family survey twice during the course of the evaluation. The first round of the survey, whose results were described above, represents a picture of the attitudes and behaviors of families on waiting lists for subsidized care during the evaluation's baseline period. This same survey will be administered to a new group of families on the waiting list during the fall of 2002 (or approximately one year after the first survey was administered), so that changes over time can be examined.

IV. Preliminary Findings on the Characteristics of CEL Families

An important advantage to this approach is that the impacts of CEL can be deduced, because most counties will have implemented CELs by the second round of survey administration while only three counties were operating a CEL during the first round of the survey. We might expect, for example, that the ways in which families hear about subsidized care and the way they apply might be fundamentally different once the CEL is introduced. Indeed, streamlining customer access to subsidized care is a primary reason why CELs have been implemented to begin with. Similarly, to the extent that families have an easier time applying for care, their attitudes and opinions about the application process might change. Ideally, for example, they would place more trust in the organization that helps them apply for care and obtain more complete information about their status.

A full investigation of these hypotheses must await the second round of survey administration. However, even now we can take advantage of the fact that, as of the round-one survey, three counties were operating with CELs while most were not. Because of this, we can compare responses of families in CEL and pre-CEL counties to get some idea of what differences we might expect to see when CELs are more fully implemented.¹²

Exhibit IV-6 shows these differences. As the table shows, there appear to be few differences in the ways that survey respondents heard about publicly funded child care in CEL and pre-CEL counties. In both groups of counties, for example, word of mouth through friends and neighbors is the predominant way of finding about the availability of care. Moderate proportions of each group (approximately 40%) also heard about publicly funded care through a provider where they wanted to enroll or a social service agency. In one difference, churches and other community organizations seemed to be less important in CEL counties, but this difference is very probably due to differences among the counties that are unrelated to the implementation of CEL itself.

Important and notable differences, however, emerge in how families put their name on the list for care. As we might expect, survey participants from pre-CEL counties were more likely to apply directly to providers than the survey participants from the CEL

¹² We caution, however, that differences between CEL and pre-CEL counties in round one could be due to any number of other causes other than the impact of the CEL, including the nature of the specific providers from which we drew the sample, county differences in the procedures used to administer social services, and average wait time, among other things. Thus, the results to be presented should be viewed as suggestive only.

counties. Conversely, survey participants from pre-CEL counties were less likely to apply through R&R agencies, even though 70% of them applied in this way (as opposed to 92% of survey participants in CEL counties).

In other results, families in CEL counties were more likely to have the expectation that putting their name on the list meant that their child care needs would be shared with other providers. However, only 41% of CEL families expected this to be true.

Elsewhere, there are some differences in families' attitudes about their interactions with the organization they contacted for care that may reflect something about the way the CEL operates. For example, families that apply in pre-CEL counties—possibly because they were more likely to apply directly to individual providers—were more likely than their CEL counterparts to believe that the organization they contacted did their best to help them understand the types of care that were available, and more of them felt that the organization helped them plan their child care needs. In very good news, overwhelming proportions of families in both pre-CEL and CEL counties agree that the organization they contacted treated them with respect.

Data from round two of the survey will help us explore these differences further and will enable us to assert with more confidence that the differences (or non-differences) that we have found in this preliminary analysis can be attributed to the implementation of CEL as opposed to other differences in county characteristics.

Exhibit IV-6: Differences in Survey Responses by CEL Status

	Pre-CEL Counties	CEL Counties
Where did you hear about publicly funded child care? (% replying yes)		
From a friend, family member, or neighbor.	79%	74%
From a provider where I wanted to enroll my child (ren).	43%	41%
From the newspaper, radio, or television.	10%	7%
From a church, library, school, or other community organization.	22%*	9%*
From a social welfare department, Child Protective Services, or another public agency.	35%	46%
How did you put your name on the list? (% replying yes)		
I applied directly to the provider(s).	66%*	40%*
I applied to the R&R agency.	70%*	92%*
I applied through the Internet.	0%	0%
When you applied, did you think your name would be shared with other providers? (% replying yes)	30%*	41%*
When you applied, how likely did you think it was that you would receive care? (% replying very or somewhat likely)	78%	73%
Percent strongly or somewhat agreeing that "The organization I contacted..."		
Treated me with respect.	86%	89%
Did their best to help me understand the types of care that were available.	71%*	60%*
Understood when my family needed care.	66%	58%
Helped me plan my needs.	45%*	31%*
Did whatever they could to help my family get care.	63%	62%

Note:

* Differences between pre-CEL and CEL counties are statistically significant at the .05 level.

V. INTERIM SYNTHESIS AND IMPLICATIONS

In previous chapters we have detailed key features of pilot counties and their CEL designs; specific challenges and successes of counties' implementation experiences; and preliminary findings on CEL family characteristics. In this chapter, we shift our attention to broader, policy level implications of the CEL Pilot Project's progress. Specifically, we provide a prognosis of CELs' potential given our analysis thus far. To inform our forecast, we also draw on the perspectives of five state-level stakeholders¹ on the potential benefits and challenges of CEL implementation. Finally, in this chapter we also look ahead to key issues and questions for the state and others to consider during the remaining CEL Pilot Project period.

FORECASTING POTENTIAL CEL BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES

It is clear that CELs have the potential to realize benefits in five key areas: (1) data-driven planning and resource allocation, (2) service delivery, (3) service integration and public-private collaboration, (4) reexamination of state-level priorities, and (5) fostering equity at the local level.

- **Data-driven planning and resource allocation.** CELs have the potential to help local communities and the state secure more accurate data on the extent and nature of the demand for subsidized child care—e.g., characteristics of families eligible for subsidized care and the types of child care these families are seeking. These data in turn can greatly and objectively inform the state's choices on how much to invest in child care, and where to invest its limited child care resources. For instance, CEL data could reveal that the state's current child care funding allocations should be shifted to reflect the true demand for particular types of child care, such as after-school or full-day programs.
- **Improved service delivery.** In addition to the need for more accurate data is the desire to positively impact families by reducing their administrative barriers to securing child care. CELs have great potential to streamline the process of applying for and receiving subsidized child care, and to promote greater parental choice. In particular, CELs can be

¹ We interviewed five state-level stakeholders in the summer/fall of 2001. These stakeholders represented the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network and the following state departments and divisions: California Department of Education (Child Development Division and Management Systems Division), Department of Social Services (CalWORKs Child Care Bureau), and the Legislative Analyst's Office.

thought of as a one-stop model for families seeking subsidized child care. Rather than requiring families to make trips to each individual provider, the family can become eligible for all open slots through a centralized system. As one state-level respondent noted, CELs *must* be concerned with positively impacting families (and providers), in that CELs will not produce the desired data if families and providers do not use the CEL.

- **CELs as a larger tool for service integration and public-private collaboration.** Besides serving as a central hub for child care needs, CELs can be conceived as a larger tool of service integration, in part by connecting public agencies. The experiences of pilot counties thus far suggest that CEL staff members are already connecting with other community partners or strengthening existing relationships in order to market the CEL and to refer families to other, relevant social service agencies. Counties such as San Francisco are making this type of collaboration and cross-reference an integral component of their CEL design by requiring families to apply for child care in person. In accordance with the public-private roots of the CEL Pilot Project, CELs could also conceivably facilitate collaboration and cross-references between public and private organizations. For instance, CELs might be used by foundations as a key data source and justification for building and dedicating resources to the challenge of meeting unserved families' need for child care—particularly unserved families that are not at the highest priority and are therefore unlikely to receive state subsidized care.
- **CELs as a catalyst for reexamining state-level priorities.** CEL data can provoke critical discussions on the distribution of priority for subsidized child care; in particular, CELs can help the state weigh the interests of CalWORKs parents, other groups of low-income working parents, and parents with special needs children. By revealing the nature of those parents who do not get served based on current funding allocations, CEL data can serve as an important basis for reexamining: the state's current target/priority groups; whether priority coverage should be redefined or extended; and which funding streams should be paying for the subsidized child care of particular subgroups, such as CPS children and special needs children. As one state-level respondent stated, "To the extent that people believe the data on unmet need to be true, then there may be a redistribution of existing resources and decisions regarding who gets in the door and for how long they have to wait." Thus far, pilot counties are still unsure as to how CELs will redistribute child care resources toward particular subgroups—e.g., how CELs' interaction with CPS may alter the nature of the families served. With regard to CalWORKs families, the preliminary experiences of

pilot counties suggest that CELs may be used primarily to prepare those families for their transition to non-guaranteed child care services.

- **CELs as a local-level equity tool.** CELs may be used as an “equity tool” not only in terms of reexamining state priorities and resource allocation, but also in terms of local procedures and outcomes. Specifically, counties have expressed that CELs impart a certain level of fairness, to the extent that a standardized intake and referral process is implemented, and participating providers can not “pick and choose” among eligible families since the CEL automatically generates the highest priority families in accordance with state guidelines. CELs may not only ensure that the highest priority families are served first, but may also result in providers serving a broader range of families than those served prior to CEL implementation. One state-level respondent specifically hypothesized that providers would begin serving families from a wider range of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. For example, a Latino family desperate for care and now eligible for a greater number of provider slots may be placed in a predominantly Asian child care center.

FORECASTING POTENTIAL CEL LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

Though CELs’ potential benefits are clear and have been articulated by a number of stakeholders at the local and state level, a number of potential limitations and challenges to expected CEL benefits should be detailed here.

- **Ultimate limitations of data.** Naturally, it can be assumed that CEL data will only provide an improved estimate of the population needing subsidized care, since there will always be parents in need of care who are not on the CEL, and there will likely always be some degree of duplication (e.g., families on multiple counties’ CELs). CEL data will also not provide a racial/ethnic portrait of parents in need of subsidized care, or an understanding of how placement of families may vary by racial/ethnic group.
- **Difficulty of cross-county data analysis.** Although the expectation is that individual county data will coalesce to form a statewide picture of those in need of subsidized child care, a number of data management issues pose a challenge. In particular, counties have very different data systems and file formats (e.g., counties are submitting data in both Excel and Access files), which renders cross-county analysis more difficult. Furthermore, counties have sometimes demonstrated their different interpretations of the required data elements (as discussed in Chapter IV). Finally, cross-county analysis of CEL data will obviously not provide explanations for observed inter-county differences (e.g.,

how local economic factors and child care trends may be interacting with the CEL to produce variable data).

- **Technological limitations.** Perhaps even greater than the limitations of CEL data are the limitations of counties' technological capacity. In particular, counties have greatly varying levels of technological resources and support available, which has implications for the user-friendliness and malleability of their system designs, how compatible systems can be rendered across counties, and local staff capacity for maintaining CELs.
- **Local politics as a deciding factor of success.** The experiences of pilot counties thus far suggest that local politics may play a significant role in determining whether a crucial collaborative tone is set for CEL implementation. In at least one pilot county, implementation delays have been due in part to historical communication and collaboration barriers between two lead agencies. In another pilot county, it is likely that the preliminary hesitation of one influential child care provider to join the CEL led other smaller agencies to hold back as well. One state-level respondent indicated that local-level interrelationships and politics were going to "make or break" the success of the CEL Pilot Project. The interrelationships between the R&R agencies, LPCs, and other lead agencies are particularly crucial—e.g., the extent to which these agencies set aside "turf" issues and set a collaborative tone for CEL implementation.
- **Documenting administrative components and processes.** Given the inevitable turnover of initial CEL planners and staff, a challenge to sustainable, effective CELs is a county's ability to have clear and thoroughly documented CEL design features, definitions, and procedures.
- **Local implications of reporting CEL data to state.** One state-level respondent predicted that local level agencies may be concerned about sending information to the state that details their child care needs, out of a fear that the state will cut resources to their local area. These fears may hinder the statewide consolidation of county-level data.
- **Methods for disseminating and realizing lessons learned.** Though the experience of CEL pilot counties is invaluable for other counties throughout the state grappling with their own CEL efforts, some ongoing challenges are: how to best harness pilot county experience for the benefit of others; how to detail what has really worked in other counties and why; how to disseminate the crucial lessons learned in a way that will help other non-pilot counties avoid similar pitfalls.
- **Questionable feasibility of replicating CEL models.** Although an obvious need exists for information on pilot counties' challenges and

best practices, it is questionable as to how feasible model replication will be in other, non-pilot counties given the sheer diversity of local contexts. This situation highlights the need for the state to find a balance between imposing proven, effective CEL models on the one hand, and allowing flexibility for innovation and local tailoring on the other.

LIKELIHOOD OF STATEWIDE IMPLEMENTATION

The benefits and challenges forecasted above raise the question of the feasibility and likelihood of statewide CEL implementation. Specifically, one must consider whether the benefits from statewide implementation outweigh the costs and challenges. Although it is still too early in the CEL Pilot Project to make this type of conclusion based on documented impact, the progress of CEL pilot counties thus far, as well as the probable benefits of CELs, shed a favorable light on the potential of statewide implementation. Indeed, several non-pilot counties are already in various stages of CEL planning and implementation because of the expected benefits to multiple stakeholders.

All five state-level respondents felt there to be a strong likelihood of the institutionalization of CELs statewide, primarily because of the high value of CEL data to those in state budget and decision making positions, and because of the need to secure the “whole picture” of California’s demand for subsidized child care. However, some of the most significant, potential challenges to statewide CEL implementation are perceived as the following:

- **State’s fiscal status.** A significant challenge to statewide CEL implementation is the state’s current, tight fiscal status.
- **Questionable centralized point of responsibility.** One state-level respondent in particular noted that once the CEL Pilot Project is over, it is unclear as to whom, or which particular body, will take central responsibility for statewide CEL implementation.
- **Inconclusiveness of preliminary CEL data.** The probability of statewide CEL implementation may depend greatly on the nature of the preliminary CEL data secured from pilot counties—i.e., how well the data paint a picture of demand for subsidized child care. Although this expectation makes sense on the surface, realizing the full potential of CEL data may take longer than anticipated, particularly when addressing the previously described challenges of cross-county analysis.
- **Individual technology situations.** The greatly varying levels of technological resources and sophistication in each county will present a significant challenge to statewide CEL implementation, particularly in terms of ensuring compatibility of systems and consistency of data. A

particularly significant investment will need to be made in counties where “technology is not as prevalent a way of doing business,” as one state-level respondent put it.

LOOKING AHEAD: KEY ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

At this point of the evaluation, several large-scope questions remain—the most obvious ones being: what are the model CEL programs and their associated costs? What are the full costs (start-up and ongoing) and the benefits associated with statewide CEL implementation? What portion of the cost should be covered by the state and what portion by the county? Thus far, we as the evaluators have only detailed the challenges and emerging promising practices of CEL pilot counties. Further implementation progress will need to be made by pilot counties in order for us to document full CEL impact at the local level (e.g., findings from CEL data, CEL benefits for providers), and its relationship to CEL costs. However, in the interest of the CEL Pilot Project’s future progress, and of the potential for statewide CEL implementation, we recommend that the following issues and questions be considered by the state and other stakeholders.

- **State guidance on key policy and implementation issues.** As our teleconferences with pilot counties demonstrate, pilot counties greatly value the opportunity to interact with representatives from the CDD, particularly to ask questions on emerging policy issues. For instance, during our last teleconference in December 2001, counties expressed the need for more state guidance on what type of priority to give families who are currently being served, but not by their first choice provider. With an eye toward statewide CEL implementation, more formalized mechanisms should be established to promote state-county communication and to ensure a degree of consistency across county approaches.
- **Communication/dissemination strategy for non-pilot counties.** While part of our evaluation study has involved facilitating communication among pilot counties, there is currently not a coordinated approach for sharing best practices and common challenges with non-pilot counties in California—e.g., a guidebook on technical design lessons. Communication with non-pilot counties is particularly crucial given that the cost-effectiveness of statewide CEL implementation will depend on the capitalization of existing models and knowledge about what works, where, and why.
- **Feasibility of technical assistance.** The experiences of pilot counties thus far underscore the need for early training and technical assistance, particularly on technology issues and interpretation of data elements. It

is unclear how this level of early support and monitoring can and/or should be provided to non-pilot counties. For instance, how could coordination occur so that less technologically sophisticated counties might capitalize on the resources and experience of more technologically savvy counties? Could a broad public-private partnership be established between the state and CompuMentor to coordinate technical assistance on system design? In looking toward future potential CEL investments, the state will need to consider the level of support necessary for such planning and collaborative efforts, in addition to implementation efforts.

- **Limiting CEL systems and file formats.** Given the preliminary challenges of pilot counties' data submissions, the type of software application and file format used for submitting CEL data needs to be more strongly limited. With an eye toward long-term sustainability, the state also needs to consider limitations on future CEL systems by selecting cost-efficient CEL models with a relatively low annual/per capita cost, and few requirements for continuous upgrades. As one state respondent explained, "Ultimately systems need to be adopted that the state can support both financially and technologically. I think to be effective there ought to be systems that the state can support and that doesn't mean one size fits all, but it probably means something less than nine totally different systems."

It is our hope that the issues identified above, and this report as a whole, will assist the state and pilot counties in building off their progress thus far. The emerging design and implementation lessons from pilot counties suggest that their experiences will prove to be an invaluable investment for the long-term objective of improving state data and decision making on subsidized child care, and reducing the administrative barriers for families in need of care.

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Appendix A: Master Copy of the Family Survey

Se incluye la versión en español

DATE

Dear Parent:

We need your help. The State of California, Department of Education has asked us to study how services can be improved for families applying for financial assistance in paying for child care (**publicly funded child care**).

We have mailed surveys to 1,000 families, including yours, that we randomly selected to help us in this important study. All of these families applied for publicly funded child care **between February 1 and April 30, 2001**.

As part of this study, we would like you to complete the enclosed survey so that we can learn about your experience in applying for child care during this period. Won't you please take a few moments to complete this survey? Your completed survey is very important for our study and for helping the State of California improve families' access to child care.

Please be assured that the information you provide will be kept confidential and will be used only for research purposes. While your participation in the survey would be greatly appreciated, it is completely voluntary, and will not influence your chances of receiving child care.

We have included an English and Spanish version of the survey. Please use the version that is most comfortable for you.

Please return the survey in the postage-paid envelope we have provided. If you have any questions, please call Aaron Dalton at (510) 763-1499, extension 647.

Thank you very much for your help. We value your feedback.

Sincerely,

Social Policy Research Associates

1. Where did you first hear about applying for publicly funded child care?
(Please circle yes or no for each row)

a.	From a friend, family member, or neighbor.	Yes	No
b.	From a child care provider where I wanted to enroll my child(ren).	Yes	No
c.	From the newspaper, radio, or television.	Yes	No
d.	From a church, library, school, or another community organization.	Yes	No
e.	From the social welfare department, child protective services, or another public agency.	Yes	No

2. How did you put your name on the list(s)? *(Please circle yes or no for each row)*

a.	I applied directly to the child care provider or providers that I was interested in placing my child(ren) with.	Yes ↓ How many providers did you apply to? _____	No
b.	I applied to <i>(insert name of county's R&R/AP)</i> .	Yes	No
c.	I put my child(ren)'s name on the list by going to a website on the Internet.	Yes	No

3. When you put your name on the list(s), did you need publicly funded child care immediately? *(Please circle only one number)*

Yes 1
 No 2

4. When you put your name on the list(s), did you think that your name and information about your child care needs would be shared with other child care providers? *(Please circle only one number)*

Yes 1
 No 2

5. When you put your name on the list(s), how likely did you think it was that you would receive publicly funded child care? *(Please circle only one number)*

- Unlikely 1
- Somewhat likely 2
- Very likely 3

6. How do you think the list works? *(Please circle only one number)*

- If I wait long enough, I will get publicly funded child care1
- My income level determines how soon I get publicly funded child care2
- My income level and the length of time I've waited determine how soon I get publicly funded child care3
- Other things besides my income level and the length of time I've waited determine how soon I get publicly funded child care4
- I don't know how the list works9

7. Please indicate if you received the information below, either in written or verbal form, when you got on the list(s). *(Please circle yes, no, or I don't remember for each row)*

a.	Whether or not my family is eligible for receiving publicly funded child care.	Yes	No	I don't remember
b.	The reasons why my family is eligible for getting publicly funded child care.	Yes	No	I don't remember
c.	My family's chances of getting publicly funded child care.	Yes	No	I don't remember
d.	How long my family might have to wait for publicly funded child care.	Yes	No	I don't remember
e.	The types of child care that are available (for example, pre-school, family day care).	Yes	No	I don't remember
f.	How to update my information on the list.	Yes	No	I don't remember

8. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

(Please circle one number for each row)

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
a. I have/had a good idea of my chances of getting publicly funded child care.	4	3	2	1
b. I was treated with respect when applying for child care.	4	3	2	1
c. The person or organization I contacted does/did their best to help me understand the types of child care that are available.	4	3	2	1
d. The person/organization I contacted understood when my family needed publicly funded child care.	4	3	2	1
e. The person/organization I contacted helped me plan for my family's child care needs over the coming years.	4	3	2	1
f. I trust the person or organization I contacted to do whatever they can to help my family get publicly funded child care.	4	3	2	1

9. How many adults (including yourself) are in your family and living in the same home? *(Please circle only one number)*

- One adult.....1
- Two adults.....2
- Three or more adults.....3

10. What is your family's current monthly income (from all sources)?

(Please circle only one number)

- Less than \$1,000 per month.....1
- \$1,001-\$1,500 per month.....2
- \$1,501-\$2,000 per month.....3
- \$2,001-\$2,500 per month.....4
- \$2,501-\$3,250 per month.....5
- More than \$3250 per month.....6

11. Are you a CalWORKS (public assistance) participant? *(Please circle only one number)*

- Yes.....1
- No.....2

12. What are the reasons your family needs child care? (Please circle yes or no for each row)

a. Adult(s) working full time	Yes	No
b. Adult(s) working part-time	Yes	No
c. Adult(s) looking for work	Yes	No
d. Adult(s) receiving education or training	Yes	No
e. Adult(s) looking for housing	Yes	No
f. Child(ren) have special needs	Yes	No
g. Child(ren) will benefit from child care	Yes	No
h. Other reason (please specify): _____		

13. Of the reasons you marked yes above, which is the most important reason your family needs child care? (Please circle only one number)

- Adult(s) working full-time 1
- Adult(s) working part-time..... 2
- Adult(s) looking for work. 3
- Adult(s) receiving education or training. 4
- Adult(s) looking for housing. 5
- Child(ren) have special needs..... 6
- Child(ren) will benefit from child care 7
- Other reason (listed above) 8

14. Please answer the following questions about your children:

- a. How many children do you have that live with you and are between the ages of 0-4 years?

- b. How many children do you have that live with you and are between the ages of 5-12 years?

- c. How many children do you have that live with you and are between the ages of 13-18 years?

15. Do you have any suggestions for improving how parents can get publicly funded child care? *(Please write your suggestions below)*

END. Thank you very much for completing this survey. Your participation is very important in helping us to understand families' needs for publicly funded child care.

Please return this completed survey in the postage-paid envelope to:

**Social Policy Research Associates
1330 Broadway, Suite 1426
Oakland, CA 94612**