

**Lessons from CARES
and Other Early Care and Education Workforce Initiatives
in California, 1999-2004:
A Review of Evaluations Completed by Fall 2004**

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Executive Summary

In the United States, the early care and education (ECE) field has long faced many challenges in attracting and maintaining the skilled and stable workforce it needs. High staff turnover prevails in the field, often fueled by poor compensation as well as limited opportunities for professional development and recognition. At the same time, in an era of mounting concern about school readiness – as well as new appreciation of how crucial the early years are for brain development, learning and lifelong success – those who work with young children are expected more and more to be knowledgeable, well-trained professionals.

The professional development and reward model commonly known as “CARES” (Compensation and Recognition Encourage Stability) emerged in California as an effort to address these issues and needs, not only promoting a better-educated and better-compensated workforce, but also motivating these practitioners to stay in the field. (Programs based on this model are also sometimes called “CRIs,” standing for “compensation and retention initiatives.”)

Since CARES began, a number of evaluations have been completed at the state and county levels. The California First 5 Commission contracted with Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) at the University of California to develop both implementation and outcome evaluations of selected counties that received First 5 matching dollars. Other counties have also conducted internal and external evaluations. This paper offers an overview of these evaluations and their findings, in terms of lessons learned and possible directions for the future.

The following are the four major findings of the “process” or implementation evaluations of CARES/CRI programs:

1. *Program design:* Variability across counties in program design reflected local interpretations of the program’s purpose, as well as the characteristics of local early care and education labor markets.
2. *Program outreach:* Across counties, programs targeted their outreach strategies to engage underserved members of their local workforce, boosting the participation

- of family child care providers, speakers of languages other than English, those serving infants and toddlers and special needs children, workers who were younger or new to the field, or those residing in more rural areas.
3. *Application process*: Determining program eligibility required intensive staff review of applicant background materials. This, in turn, led counties to institute face-to-face meetings and other supports for applicants, and to rely increasingly on the Child Development Permit, despite its limitations, as the official record of applicant educational status and eligibility.
 4. *Interface with community resources*: The presence of CARES/CRI programs simultaneously served as a catalyst for a substantial increase in the professional development activity and educational attainment of the ECE workforce, and for a variety of improvements in local professional development infrastructures.

Of the five external evaluations of program outcomes summarized in this report, the most comprehensive was the 10-county evaluation by PACE. Its major findings were the following:

1. *Program participation*
 - In the first three years of the Matching Funds program statewide, county efforts served a large and diverse population of early care and education practitioners.
 - Center-based staff were a sizeable majority among participants, but programs sought actively in the second and third years to increase the participation of family child care providers.
2. *Coursework and training*
 - Participants generally exceeded program requirements in the amount of education and training they received.
 - There was consistent and strong evidence that participating in CARES/CRI programs leads to stronger involvement in professional development.
 - The design of the evaluation did not allow PACE to assess how different program models were related to better training and educational outcomes.
 - Despite ongoing barriers and needs for improvement in county and state education and training systems, participants were highly motivated to pursue education and training.
3. *Retention*
 - The vast majority of program participants remained in the ECE field. Fully 96 percent of participants still worked in the field 12 months after joining the program, and 93 percent remained 18 months later.
 - Among those remaining in the field (i.e., almost all staff included in the study), CRI participants were more than twice as likely to remain in the same center over a two-year period as were non-participants.
 - Across first-time participants in the in-depth study counties, approximately 68 percent returned to the program for a second year. Program retention rates were higher in programs with less demanding eligibility requirements.

Similarly, external evaluations conducted in Contra Costa, Fresno, San Diego and San Francisco Counties found substantially increased involvement in professional development, and significant increases in staff retention.

In terms of the professional development of the early care and education workforce, the evaluations reviewed for this report strongly suggest that California's widespread CARES/CRI efforts have accomplished what they were intended for. They have motivated many practitioners, with a variety of characteristics, to become more engaged in their own professional development – whether as a reward for those already involved or as a motivator for those just starting on their way. Throughout the state, CARES/CRI program participants are attending training, taking unit-bearing classes, and in many cases, entering or advancing on the Child Development Permit Matrix.

But while the various evaluation efforts have contributed to a greater understanding of the CARES/CRI programs, this review has also revealed some limitations. Despite a great deal of cost and effort, there have not been as many answers generated by this body of research as might have been expected. Several questions, primarily about individual and organizational change, are still largely unanswered – namely, to what extent practitioners' own classroom behavior changed as a result of participating in CARES/CRI, and what observable impacts these initiatives had, if any, on ECE program quality.

The following are recommendations for future research:

- Strengthen support for a statewide administrative data base based on a common application process across counties, and invest in resources to generate local and statewide reports on participant activity and progress.
- Periodically conduct surveys among those *not* participating in CARES/CRI programs, to ascertain how or whether they might be encouraged to engage in professional development efforts. (Provide sufficient funding to support phone surveys in order to boost response rates).
- Revisit the issue of cost/benefit analyses of CARES/CRI programs, distinguishing among issues related to program administration, program design, cost per participant, and longitudinal benefits.
- Support studies with an observational component to examine:
 1. changes in teacher performance based on various educational inputs (e.g., number and duration of courses, course content, practicum experiences); and
 2. changes in program quality based on variations in the proportion of staff at a given center participating in CARES/CRI or other professional development efforts, and variations in the intensity of the efforts.

Part I: The Emergence of CARES/CRI Programs: Rationale and History

Introduction

While there are many components to assuring the quality of early care and education services to children and families, including the facility and the curriculum, there is widespread agreement that quality rests most in the hands of the people who provide these services. Their knowledge about children's development, their ability to translate this knowledge into appropriate activities and interactions, and the consistency of their relationships with the children in their care, all contribute to whether non-parental care fosters or hinders the potential of young children in such programs.

Yet in the United States, the early care and education field has long faced many challenges in attracting and maintaining the skilled and stable workforce it needs. High staff turnover prevails in the field, often fueled by poor compensation as well as limited opportunities for professional development and recognition. Many practitioners continue to leave the field, despite their skill and their level of investment in training and education, because they cannot economically afford to stay. While teachers and administrators in center-based child care are as likely to have attended some college as members of the overall U.S. workforce, the median wage for these workers is less than two-thirds that for all workers (Herzenberg & Price, in press).

Within this context of high turnover and low compensation, there are also increasing demands on the early care and education workforce to deepen their professional understanding of children and families in order to offer high-quality programs. In an era of mounting concern about school readiness, the early detection of special needs, and the complexity of second-language learning – as well as new appreciation of how crucial the early years are for brain development, learning and lifelong success – those who work with young children are expected more and more to be knowledgeable about all of these areas (Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children, 1994; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

The professional development and reward model commonly known as “CARES” (Compensation and Recognition Encourage Stability) emerged in California as an effort to address these issues and needs, not only promoting a better-educated and better-compensated workforce, but also motivating these practitioners to stay in the early care and education field. (Programs based on this model are also sometimes called “CRIs,” standing for “compensation and retention initiatives.”)

From the beginning, CARES programs have sparked genuine interest in what aspects of the model work well, and how best to promote retention and professional development. But at the same time, the model has met with varying degrees of skepticism, in part because it broke new ground in providing financial rewards linked to professional development. Although the practice of providing financial resources to teachers is widespread in K-12 education, this was often seen as a bold step in the under-resourced early care and education field. Programs based on the CARES model were up

and running in the state on a very short time frame. In a little over three years, over 40,000 members of the early care and education workforce had participated in a county program, and roughly \$240 million dollars had been invested in this new initiative.

Although the assumptions on which the program was designed were rooted in decades-long research, funding agencies and other stakeholders expressed varying degrees of skepticism about whether these programs would deliver on their promise of a more skilled and stable workforce. In addition, program administrators and other policy stakeholders – well aware of the challenges of starting such programs “from scratch” – recognized the importance of formative evaluation to help build responsive and efficient services. As a result, from the outset, there was considerable interest in evaluating these efforts.

At the county level, many of the funding agencies required some form of evaluation as a condition of funding. Since CARES began, a number of evaluations have been completed at the state and county levels. The state First 5 Commission, as described in the following section, invested heavily in CARES/CRI programs, helping to promote them statewide, and as part of this commitment, contracted with Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) at the University of California at Berkeley to develop both implementation and outcome evaluations of selected counties that were augmenting county investments with state First 5 dollars. More recently, the Child Development Division of the State Department of Education also supported a four-county evaluation of programs that it supports (“AB 212 programs,” described in the next section).

While the early care and education field has generally welcomed this widespread evaluation effort, there has been concern that assessing outcomes as programs are beginning may lead to what is referred to as “start-up noise,” and that programs are better assessed when they have reached some modicum of maturity (Gomby, 1999). On the other hand, formative evaluation efforts have the potential to yield valuable lessons about the start-up processes of CARES programs, and how to modify and adapt them for the future. It has been important to assess CARES programs not only for how well they have met their goals of professional development and retention, but also for what lessons they can offer as new models emerge.

This paper offers an overview of these evaluations and their findings, in terms of lessons learned and possible directions for the future. It considers the following questions:

- issues that emerged during program implementation, and whether and how these are being resolved;
- program outcomes in terms of population reached, impact on professional development, and retention of the workforce in their jobs and in the field;
- impacts on individual child care programs and on institutions providing education and training to the early care and education (ECE) workforce;
- impacts on children, in terms of improved classroom/program practice;

- the overall success of the CARES model as a vehicle for moving teachers and providers up a professional ECE career ladder.

*Defining the CARES Initiative*¹

As originally written, the California CARES proposal was intended to help build and reward a skilled and stable child care workforce throughout the state through two programs:

- The *Child Development Corps*, which would include family child care providers and center-based staff (including teachers, site supervisors and directors) who meet certain education and training qualifications, commit to continuing their professional development for at least 21 hours per year, and agree to provide child care services for a specified period of time. Members of the Corps would receive monetary rewards ranging from \$500 to \$6,000 per year, depending on their education and background.
- *Resources for Retention*, which would provide additional support to public and private child care programs committed to improving quality, by providing differential reimbursement rates and Quality Improvement Rewards to help the programs achieve accreditation and improve staff retention.

While the Child Development Corps component of the model addresses the compensation of the child care workforce by providing professional development rewards for existing and future education and training, it does not raise these workers' base salaries or hourly earnings, and thus cannot strictly be considered a "compensation initiative." Resources for Retention had the potential to affect base salaries, but it has not been included in the design of most CARES/CRI programs.

While each county is free to make variations on this model to meet local needs, the five points below define the core principles of California CARES:

1. The Child Development Corps is open to home-based child care providers (both licensed and license-exempt), family child care assistants, and center-based staff in public and private child care programs. In center-based programs, all teaching staff and all administrative staff who supervise their work with children are eligible, regardless of job title and program type, including for-profit, faith-based, private nonprofit, and subsidized programs.
2. Stipends reward individuals both for attained education and for continuing education and professional growth.
3. Stipend increments are based on the Child Development Permit Matrix, the statewide professional development system for teaching and administrative staff.

¹ Source: Burton, Mihaly, Kagiwada & Whitebook, 2000.

The Matrix system is a requirement for certain subsidized programs that must meet more stringent funding requirements (Title 5), and it can be voluntarily adopted by other programs.

4. Stipends reward individuals who have been at their current child care job for a set period, typically a minimum of nine months to one year.
5. Stipends for those with higher levels of education seek to help bridge the gap between child care and elementary school salaries.

Historical Background: The Emergence of the California CARES Model

A longitudinal study of staffing in child care centers in three California counties, released in 2001 – finding that centers had lost the majority of their staff in less than five years – underscores the severity of the staff instability problem in the years just before the first CARES programs began. Further, the study found that turnover among the best-trained staff led to more widespread turnover within centers, but conversely, that centers' ability to retain their best-trained staff increased their chances of retaining staff overall (Whitebook, Sakai, Gerber & Howes, 2001).

For a number of years, efforts to address the problems of staff recruitment and retention in the ECE field had focused on securing quality enhancement dollars through the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant. These funds were seen as a possible way to provide at least a small financial reward for members of the ECE workforce who had invested in their professional development. But in 1997, after meeting with resistance from the State Department of Education (SDE) over such use of the quality funds, advocates decided to approach the California legislature with their problem, strategizing that attention by lawmakers might help to jumpstart efforts within the Child Development Division of the SDE (Whitebook et al., 1996). After a lengthy process to gather input from service providers across the state, a coalition of organizations and individuals led by the Center for the Child Care Workforce designed the CARES initiative. First as Assembly Bill 2025 and later as AB 212, the initiative easily passed the legislature twice with bipartisan support, but was vetoed both times, first by Republican Governor Pete Wilson and then by Democratic Governor Gray Davis. Governor Davis signed a redesigned version of AB212 when it came across his desk a second time, which maintained the key components of the model but provided funding only for those working in state-contracted programs (Burton, Mihaly, Kagiwada & Whitebook, 2000).

In the interim, however, advocates in San Francisco and Alameda Counties spearheaded efforts to leverage local dollars to initiate the main features of the CARES concept in their own communities. In 1999, San Francisco invested \$1.5 million of its City and County general funds for the SFCARES program, while Alameda County established the Child Development Corps with an investment of \$3.8 million from its Proposition 10 tobacco tax allocation. During 1999, the Quality Child Care Initiative, underwritten by a coalition of Bay Area funders committed to improving early care and

education services in the region, provided resources to the Center for the Child Care Workforce to offer technical assistance and support to more than a dozen counties that sought to develop similar local programs.² Governor Davis signed AB212 at the end of the 2000 legislative session, allocating \$15 million dollars to state-contracted programs for a CARES-type program to begin in 2001, and this effort has received renewed funding in subsequent years. In 2000, First 5 California (also known as the California Children and Families Commission) made statewide dollars from tobacco tax revenues available for the Matching Funds for Retention Incentives (MFFRI) Project, recognizing that a better educated and more stable workforce is an essential building block for First 5's own initiatives to promote school readiness and Preschool for All throughout the state.

During 2000-2001, 14 California counties participated in First 5's Matching Funds program; 41 counties participated in the second and third years; and as of 2004, 47 counties are receiving matching dollars for local professional development efforts. AB212 funds are currently going to every county with state-contracted early care and education programs except for Alpine, Mariposa, and Sierra. According to First 5 California, \$164 million has been invested in these initiatives as of spring 2004, with approximately 20 percent of the funds from the state commission and the remainder from county First 5 commissions. In the first three years of the program, over 34,000 early educators participated in one of the local First 5-funded programs. Of these, family child care providers constituted about 20 percent of participants; roughly 60 percent worked in programs serving infants and toddlers; and 69 percent served children whose primary language was not English.

When AB212-funded programs are added to these totals, roughly \$240 million has been invested in CARES/CRI programs, and more than 40,000 people have participated in them.

Several dynamics contributed to the fast-paced expansion of CARES programs across the state:

- From the onset, the program had broad appeal because it sought to address problems experienced throughout the field and throughout the state.
- The prolonged legislative effort made the initiative well known throughout the field.
- Local First 5 funds provided every California county with a potential source of funding for a CARES program.
- First 5 California's statewide Matching Funds project gave each county an additional incentive to get involved in CARES and leverage state dollars.
- Most counties were also able to access state AB212 funds.

² Subsequently, Working for Quality Child Care (W4QCC), an offshoot of the Center for the Child Care Workforce housed at the United Way of the Bay Area, has continued to offer technical assistance to CARES programs. In 2004, W4QCC received funding from First 5 California to work with the Child Development Training Consortium in extending technical assistance to these programs throughout the state.

- Once San Francisco and Alameda Counties “broke the ice” by launching local programs, other counties quickly viewed the effort as feasible in their own settings.
- Support from the Quality Child Care Initiative, a consortium of Bay Area funders, provided additional resources for program developers and policy makers in Northern California to learn from each other’s CARES efforts.

Despite the promise of the model, however, the fast-paced emergence of CARES resulted in programs being developed with little benefit of research regarding the most effective ways to organize and promote them. This, of course, has also been the case in the rollout of a number of initiatives in early care and education and other fields. By contrast, however, the California Early Childhood Mentor Program (CECMP), the previously most widespread professional development and financial reward effort in the state, benefited from a more gradual period of expansion. Begun in 1988 by Chabot College and the Center for the Child Care Workforce as a pilot on the Chabot College campus, it expanded after two years to six additional campuses, gradually reaching its current size of 70 community college-based programs. The CECMP has also been centralized, with all sites essentially following the same model and modifying their efforts over time based on lessons learned.

In the case of CARES, however, every local program has introduced its own variation on the themes laid out in the original legislation. Most programs have made adjustments to the original model along several dimensions, including eligibility requirements (e.g., number of units, length of tenure at workplace), stipend amounts and range of stipends, availability of professional development activities, requirements for ongoing participation, and the role of the Child Development Permit.

Evaluations Selected for Review

As with the CARES/CRI programs themselves, the evaluation effort included some statewide coordination as well as a great deal of local variation. As previously mentioned, the California First 5 Commission contracted with Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) at the University of California to develop both implementation and outcome evaluations of selected counties that received First 5 matching dollars. This effort focused primarily on ten³ counties (described below), examining the issues that programs faced in start-up and the extent to which programs realized the goals of improving staff retention and professional development. The Child Development Division of the State Department of Education also supported a four-county process evaluation of AB212 programs, but unfortunately this study was not yet ready for review.⁴ More than one-half of the 58 counties in the state (n=35) reported that an evaluation of their programs had been, or was in the process of being, conducted.

In 12 of the 35 counties, the evaluation reports were not completed or were not available as of this writing. Of the remaining 23 counties, 11 were involved in the PACE efforts. Two of these 11 – Fresno and San Francisco – conducted additional external evaluations, and two conducted additional internal evaluations. Of the 12 counties not involved in the PACE efforts, five conducted external evaluations and seven conducted internal evaluations. With respect to program implementation or process evaluations, we considered the findings (most of which were qualitative) from all the reports, whether they were conducted internally by program staff or by external evaluators. With respect to program outcomes, we report only on those that were conducted by external evaluators (n=7) and that demonstrated some analytical rigor (n=4). (See table at the end of this document, “CARES/CRI Program Evaluations.”)

In the following sections of this report, we begin by reviewing the implementation study findings, followed by findings from the outcome evaluations. We conclude with an analysis of lessons learned, as well as recommendations for further evaluation of professional development efforts.

³ Prior to starting the ten-county implementation and outcome evaluations, PACE also conducted a case study assessment of the start-up phase of San Francisco CARES and the Alameda County Child Development Corps.

⁴ “A Report on California’s AB 212 Initiative and Recruitment and Retention Efforts in the Child Care Field,” prepared by MGT of America, Inc. for the California Department of Education, Child Development Division (CDE/CDD), is expected to be published in early 2005. The report describes the AB 212 initiative and provides case study profiles of recruitment and retention efforts in four California counties: Contra Costa, Imperial, Orange and San Joaquin.

Part 2: Implementation or Process Evaluations

The AB212 legislation outlined the CARES program, but the program design had not been piloted prior to implementation. Two counties, San Francisco and Alameda, began their programs first, and their experiences were instructive for other counties that initiated programs after them. But because there was no centralized administration for CARES, each county was free to adapt the model to its particular community needs, within the parameters of the First 5 program funding and the AB212 legislation. In this section, we identify issues that emerged in the start-up phase of these programs, many of which have been or are being addressed as programs reach maturity. After several years of operation, new issues are emerging for most programs, driven by rising costs, uncertainty about future funding, lessons learned from participants and program administrators, and the shifting policy climate in the state. For a discussion of these emerging issues, see Burton (2004).

What initial challenges did programs face, and how did they respond? To answer this question, we looked to three sources of information:

- We reviewed the findings drawn from PACE's in-depth examination of CRI programs in ten counties: Alameda, Butte, Fresno, Napa, Riverside, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Siskiyou, Stanislaus and Ventura, as well as the initial case studies of Alameda and San Francisco Counties. Between 2001 and 2004, the PACE team conducted two to three site visits to each of these counties, to ascertain the successes and barriers to program development and operation. Site visits included key informant and focus group interviews with program administrators, First 5 commissioners, participants, parents, community college instructors, and others involved in local professional development activities.
- We examined external evaluations of CRI programs conducted in Fresno, Marin, San Diego, San Francisco and Sutter Counties. Unfortunately, insights from the implementation of AB212 in Contra Costa, Imperial, Orange and San Joaquin Counties are not included here, because the report was not yet available for distribution, but it will be available in early 2005 from the California Department of Education, Child Development Division.
- We relied on internal evaluations that had been completed by CRI programs in Amador, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano and Stanislaus Counties.

These three sources of data identified similar issues among the counties, capturing the challenges inherent in starting an ambitious new program on a relatively tight timeline. Using mostly qualitative data, these studies capture the developmental progress of these programs on their road to maturity with respect to: 1) program design, 2) outreach, 3) application processes, and 4) interface with community resources.

Program Design

Variability across counties in program design reflected local interpretations of the program's purpose, as well as the characteristics of local early care and education labor markets.

To a greater or lesser extent, all of the programs considered in these evaluations were modeled on the original CARES program designed by the Center for the Child Care Workforce and described in the AB212 legislation (Burton et al., 2000). Across counties, programs provided a stipend to participants in order to reward and/or encourage their professional development and job retention. In most cases, the county programs defined eligibility, at least initially, as having completed a minimum of 12 units of early childhood education, and having been employed at their current job for nine to 12 months. Stipends typically were graduated, so that participants who had completed more education and training received higher rewards.

Within this general frame, however, counties varied along several dimensions: the size and range of stipends, and initial and continuing eligibility requirements. For example:

- Entry-level stipends varied across the ten PACE counties, from \$80 to \$200 per participant, while those at the top of the educational ladder were eligible for stipends ranging from \$2,000 to \$6,000 per year.
- Some counties also offered stipend bonuses to encourage those with certain skills or backgrounds to participate, including practitioners who spoke a second language and used it in the classroom, and those with a background in special education.
- While most counties required participants to have completed 12 units of college-level course work in early childhood education, a number of counties lowered their eligibility criteria in order to boost the participation of family child care providers, who typically have completed less education than center staff. Some counties, in response to First 5 guidelines, have also instituted a pre-entry level for participants who have not completed college-based training but are pursuing informal professional development opportunities.
- As continuing eligibility requirements, most counties required participants to obtain a Child Development Permit and complete college units. Other requirements varied, including self-assessments using such tools as the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, or completion of professional development hours.

Some of this variability in program design is related to differing degrees of emphasis among the counties on the various purposes of these initiatives – namely, recruitment, retention and professional development.

Some counties saw the program, first and foremost, as a retention and compensation effort, particularly for those who had already invested substantially in their

careers. The program addressed the concern that skilled and trained members of the workforce were not staying in the field because of low salaries and lack of recognition (Whitebook & Sakai, 2004). This issue was particularly pressing during the time that CARES and AB212 were designed, partly due to low unemployment, and partly to the new employment opportunities for degreed teachers created by class size reduction in the early elementary grades. (As the economy entered a downturn, however, the workforce stabilized somewhat because of high unemployment rates.) In this conception of the CARES model, the size of the stipend was conceived in part as a way to fill the gap between what practitioners earned in early care and education, and what they would earn if their jobs were better resourced (e.g., to be comparable with pay in elementary education).

Others saw the initiative as an opportunity to engage all members of the early care and education workforce in advancing their professional development, whether they were considered entry-level or advanced. In this conception of the model, the stipend was seen as an incentive to encourage all participants to pursue further training and education.

Other differences followed from varying emphases on the purpose of CARES/CRI programs. To the extent that programs were focused on the entire workforce, and depending on the characteristics of the early care and education workforce in their communities, there was a move to broaden eligibility, and indeed many counties lowered the number of college units required for participation.

The amount of funds available in each community, coupled with the size and characteristics of the workforce, also influenced the stipend design. Because many counties really did not know the size and characteristics of their workforce, and because the programs had limited funds to spend on stipends, variation in stipend structure also resulted from philosophical differences about whether all who were eligible should receive funding (but at a lower level than initially proposed) or whether a lottery or other method should be used to select only a certain portion of those eligible, because of limited funds.

Program Outreach

Across counties, programs targeted their outreach strategies to engage underserved members of their local workforce, boosting the participation of family child care providers, speakers of languages other than English, those serving infants and toddlers and special needs children, workers who were younger or new to the field, or those residing in more rural areas.

As originally designed, the CARES model focused on center staff and family child care providers working in primarily licensed programs, establishing the same eligibility requirements across settings – typically, a minimum of 12 units of college-level course work in early childhood education. Because of variable licensing standards across sectors of the workforce, however, center staff were more likely to meet these criteria for participation. In addition, those who did not speak English or who worked in

license-exempt home-based settings were less likely to learn about the program and/or to meet the eligibility requirements.

As a result, counties sought to create programs that would include a broad spectrum of the workforce, and undertook a variety of outreach strategies to boost participation among under-represented groups. Particularly in the first year of funding, many programs faced an exceptionally short turnaround time between the program's inception and the deadline by which stipends had to be distributed, leading to under-representation of family child care providers and other segments of the workforce. In subsequent years, counties reported undertaking a variety of strategies, such as direct telephone outreach to prospective participants, translation of materials into Spanish and other languages, and personal outreach to family child care associations and other groups. Additionally, to boost outreach, several counties supported career advisors, and increased the number of community meetings where potential participants could learn about the program requirements and receive assistance with the application process.

Application Process

Determining program eligibility required intensive staff review of applicant background materials. This, in turn, led counties to institute face-to-face meetings and other supports for applicants, and to rely increasingly on the Child Development Permit, despite its limitations, as the official record of applicant educational status and eligibility.

With the exception of staff in programs that contract with the State Department of Education to provide services for young children, most members of California's early care and education workforce are not required to be individually certified. Absent individual licensure, there is no established record of individuals' educational backgrounds, nor are members of the ECE workforce necessarily accustomed to submitting their educational and employment histories for review. CARES/CRI programs, therefore, have faced several interrelated challenges related to the application process.

In order to determine stipend levels, which are based on the completion of certain courses, units and/or degrees, programs began by reviewing each individual's transcripts from the educational institutions he or she had attended. But this typically became an excessively labor intensive process, with staff working much longer hours than expected to complete their reviews, and often calling on volunteers or paid consultants to assist them. Since many applicants had attended more than one institution – most of these without articulation agreements – staff often had to obtain syllabi to determine whether a particular course met program requirements. In addition, a substantial number of applicants had attended college in other countries, and the translation and review of foreign documents was time-consuming and often expensive. Further complicating the review process was the fact that some courses were completed on the quarter system, while others were on the semester system, requiring conversions to a consistent standard. The slowness of the transcript review process also proved challenging for program

planning, since programs were unable to determine how many applicants qualified for stipends at various levels until transcript reviews were completed.

For applicants, too – largely unaccustomed to being asked to show evidence of their educational background or work experience – the application process was often challenging and frustrating. Some were surprised or upset to learn that their applications had been rejected, or that they qualified for a lower stipend level than anticipated. This led programs to establish appeals processes, which in some instances became contentious.

In response to these challenges, CARES/CRI programs across the state instituted policies and practices to simplify the application process both for applicants and for program administrators. Most programs now require – or are in the process of requiring – participants to apply for a Child Development Permit, which is used in lieu of transcripts to determine an applicant’s level of eligibility. The Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) reviews the transcripts, and in many cases has previously determined whether courses from various colleges meet their specifications. The advantage of this process is that CARES/CRI programs generally no longer need to review individual transcripts. One concern, however, is that the permit requirement might discourage family child care providers, who are more likely than center-based staff to have completed informal, non-credit bearing training, typically not recognized by the CTC.

Most programs have instituted a range of other options that make the application process easier overall for participants. These include mandatory orientation meetings prior to application, the availability of career and academic counselors, and assistance from professional development advisors, often in languages other than English as needed. Such changes in the application process reflect the generally responsive nature of CARES/CRI programs, as well as their role in promoting a more streamlined professional development system.

Interface with Community Resources

The presence of CARES/CRI programs simultaneously served as a catalyst for a substantial increase in the professional development activity and educational attainment of the ECE workforce, and for a variety of improvements in local professional development infrastructures.

CARES/CRI programs provided resources that motivated members of the ECE workforce to invest in their professional development. As a result, counties with CARES/CRI programs experienced an increased number of people attending or seeking to attend early childhood education, child development and general education classes, and a dramatic increase in the number of applicants for Child Development Permits. While this interest and activity were welcome signs of the programs’ success, they also revealed the limitations of most counties’ professional development resources. Many colleges, for example, were unable to provide a sufficient number of classes on a

schedule suitable for students working full-time, and the higher volume of requests for permits led to delays in processing at the Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

Acting to some extent as a broker between program participants and local education and training institutions, CARES/CRI programs in many communities helped to clarify professional development needs, spearheaded collaborations among institutions, and helped to facilitate or leverage new services. Educational opportunity gaps became particularly clear for students at opposite ends of the spectrum – those with little or no prior experience with the formal education system, and those who had invested heavily in their professional development but could not identify appropriate resources that met their needs for advanced coursework or training. CARES/CRI programs also highlighted the need for better support strategies to help participants complete the necessary general education courses to advance on the Child Development Permit Matrix, and to help English language learners pursue their child development education while mastering English. Other widespread needs were for evening and Saturday classes, more accessible locations, more educational opportunities in rural areas, and substitute coverage to allow participants to take daytime classes.

In some counties, CARES/CRI programs (or their parent agencies, such as Every Child Counts in Alameda County) helped create new initiatives to fill various gaps in the ECE professional development infrastructure. The Alameda County First 5 Commission, through its Every Child Counts initiative, provided funding for a network of career development counselors and academic advisors at each of the county’s community colleges and at the four local child care resource and referral agencies. These advisors have not only helped students navigate local resources, but they also serve as spokespersons for the ECE workforce within the colleges and other training institutions. In other counties, CARES/CRI programs have helped to link participants to a variety of resources such as funding for books and tuition through the Child Development Training Consortium.

The ten-county PACE study noted two significant areas in which CARES/CRI programs had fostered an effective interface with community resources:

- The quality of training and coursework offerings varied, and two strategies were most effective in addressing this issue: requiring participants to obtain a Child Development Permit, and requiring participation in professional growth advising. Programs that required a Permit were able to ensure that all coursework met the criteria of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC), and to reduce the amount of time and money spent on internal transcript review. Further, the presence of professional growth advisors helped to regulate the quality of non-unit-bearing training, and was effective in helping participants clarify their long-term professional development goals and options. By creating links with the Permit system and professional advising efforts, these CARES/CRI programs “helped to streamline the professional development system for California’s ECE staff.”

- CARES/CRI programs actively sought to address local training barriers, and new collaborations between these programs and community colleges – notably in Alameda and Fresno Counties – were particularly effective. The Fresno County CARES Project, for example, created a formal partnership with Fresno City College, as well as developing relationships with staff at Reedley College, West Hills College, and California State University-Fresno, encouraging instructors to expand ECE course offerings aligned with the Child Development Permit Matrix at times convenient for working students. As a result, these colleges have begun offering specific courses that had been lacking in the county, including Child, Family and Community and Adult Supervision, and Fresno City College is offering more ECE courses in Spanish.

By creating locally based initiatives to help members of the ECE workforce pursue professional development, CARES/CRI programs have not only helped to expose problems related to training access and content, but have also brought people together to discuss these problems and generate solutions. Across the state, CARES/CRI programs have raised the level of discussion among practitioners, policy makers and funders about ways to bolster California's ECE professional development infrastructure. Having met the laudable goal of helping many members of the workforce make a commitment to professional development, programs are increasingly focused on helping participants move toward more advanced educational milestones.

Part 3: Outcome or Impact Evaluations

The CARES model was predicated on the assumption that financial reward would promote and reward professional development among ECE practitioners, which in turn would contribute to workforce stability, program quality improvement, and ultimately, better outcomes for children. The outcome evaluations completed to date only directly address the question of whether the CARES model contributed to professional development and retention. Although some of the evaluations include self-reported data about quality improvement, observational data would be necessary in order to reach a definitive conclusion that ECE programs did indeed improve in quality, and such data collection has not been a part of any of the evaluations conducted thus far. In addition, assessing program improvement is complicated by the fact that CARES/CRI participants did not engage in uniform professional development activities, and ECE programs experienced very different participation rates in CARES/CRI efforts among their staff.

In determining which evaluations to include in this review of program outcomes, we selected only from the external evaluations conducted to date. As described in the previous section, we examined both internal and external evaluations for information about program implementation. These assessments varied methodologically: most relied on analysis of administrative data collected from program participants, and focus groups or key informant interviews, for their information. Some surveyed participants about their experience in the program, and one included participants' evaluations of workshops they had attended.

We closely examined all of the external evaluations for possible inclusion in this review. Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) at the University of California, Berkeley conducted the most extensive and rigorous evaluation of the CARES/CRI programs. The findings from its ten-county, in-depth study are summarized in the following section. Apart from the PACE study, only four of the other seven external evaluations are included in our review. One was excluded because it failed to include any information about methodology or the representativeness of the sample. A second was excluded because it relied primarily on administrative data. A third was excluded because of its small sample size, as well as the similarity of its findings to those of the PACE report in terms of professional development outcomes.

The five external evaluations reviewed in this section include the PACE study and studies of the programs in Contra Costa, Fresno, San Diego and San Francisco Counties. In the descriptions of the methodology of each of these studies below, we note limitations in study design, sample and analyses. Except for the PACE study, which utilized a phone survey, these evaluations relied on mail surveys for information. Although the response rates of 35-60 percent were typical for this type of research, the participation rate in some was sufficiently low to raise questions about whether the samples were representative of the population, and thus, whether their findings can be generalized. All of these studies examined at least some aspect of the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics of participants in CARES/CRI programs?

2. To what extent did participants advance their professional development?
3. To what extent did participants remain at their jobs?
4. What are the implications of the CARES program for future professional development efforts?

None of the evaluations conducted to date examine the extent to which advances in professional development led to improved practices with children, and the extent to which participation in the program led to overall quality improvement. The need for further research in this area is discussed in Part 4.

***Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE):
Matching Funds for Retention Evaluation, 2001-2004***

In order to determine the effectiveness of its investment in county-based programs based on the CARES model, First 5 California contracted in 2001 with PACE for a three-year evaluation effort. The following is a review of the PACE findings as detailed in its fall 2004 report (Hamre et al., 2004).

The ten counties selected by PACE for in-depth study were Alameda, Butte, Fresno, Napa, Riverside, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Siskiyou, Stanislaus, and Ventura. The in-depth study consisted of telephone surveys with project participants, a qualitative implementation study, and program cost analyses. As background information, the PACE report also incorporated administrative data available from all 41 counties that participated in First 5's Matching Funds program in 2001-2003. In addition, PACE was able to draw comparisons between CRI participants and non-participants in one county only (San Mateo). Our summary focuses on findings from the in-depth studies of ten counties.

Key Research Questions

The PACE evaluation assesses:

- The characteristics of participants in CRI programs, and how these varied across counties.
- The effects of the programs in terms of encouraging participants to pursue education and training, and to remain in their jobs and/or in the early care and education field.
- The implications of various CRI program models in terms of overall effectiveness.

Findings

Program Participation

1. *In the first three years of the Matching Funds program statewide, county efforts served a large and diverse population of early care and education practitioners.*

The PACE evaluation gathered data on program participants (5,060 center-based staff, and 736 family child care providers) in the following categories. Among center-based participants, 48 percent worked as teachers, 23 percent assistant/associate teachers, 18 percent as teacher-directors, and 9 percent as administrative directors; a small number of staff reported working in other capacities, such as language specialists.

- *Age:* The average age of all program participants in the ten counties – both center-based staff and family child care providers – was 42.
- *Race/ethnicity:* Forty-seven percent of participants were White; 26 percent were Latino; 14 percent were African American, and 7 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander. These figures were roughly equivalent for center-based staff and family child care providers, except for the Asian/Pacific Islander group (9 percent of center staff, and 2 percent of family child care providers.)
- *Language:* Thirty-four percent of participants reported speaking a language other than English with the children in their care; Spanish was by far the most prevalent other language spoken. Among those who were fluent in a language other than English, 30 percent estimated that they use that language at least half of the day.
- *Education:* Among center-based staff, 37 percent had attended some college; 27 percent had an AA degree (22 percent in ECE); 23 percent had a BA degree (10 percent in ECE); and 9 percent had a graduate degree (5 percent in ECE). Among family child care providers, 48 percent had attended some college; 19 percent had an AA degree (11 percent in ECE); 12 percent had a BA degree (4 percent in ECE); and 2 percent had a graduate degree (1 percent in ECE).
- *Years in the ECE field:* Longevity in the field was a definite hallmark of program participants, with an average of 13 years' experience. While PACE did not collect data on years *at one's present job*, it found that 17 percent of center-based staff and 33 percent of providers, had been in the field from one to four years; 23 percent of center staff and 22 percent of providers, five to nine years; 21 percent of center staff and 20 percent of providers, 10 to 14 years; and 39 percent of center staff and 25 percent of providers, 15 years or more.
- *Annual salary and hourly wage:* The average annual salary for all participants was \$27,436. (Average *household* income for all participants was roughly \$51,000.) Unfortunately, PACE averaged its annual salary data and hourly wage data across all 10 counties, whether urban or rural, and therefore did not capture regional variation in its reported results. *Hourly wage:* The average hourly wage for center-based staff was \$14.50, and for family child care providers, \$11.72. Family child care providers (32 percent) were far more likely than center staff (3 percent) to report wages under \$7.00 per hour. Further, PACE reported that “in comparison to state medians, wages were low for center-based and family child care participants.” Somewhat

misleadingly, however, the report drew these comparisons based on household income – using figures that did not account for family size – rather than individual income.

- *Paid hours per week:* Family child care providers, on average, worked for considerably more hours per week (50) than center staff (35), but as noted above, they earned roughly the same annual salary as center staff despite these longer hours.
- *Program type:* ACE also reported that “center-based participants, overall, appeared to be representative of the wider ECE workforce, but family child care participants were more educated and highly paid than is typical for these providers.” This may be a result of eligibility requirements that excluded a significant number of family child care providers.

2. Center-based staff were a sizeable majority among participants, but programs sought actively in the second and third years to increase the participation of family child care providers.

The ten counties under study varied significantly in the first year regarding the initial eligibility requirements for family child care providers, ranging from a low of six hours of training beyond licensing requirements⁵ to a maximum of 12 ECE units. PACE found that the counties that set initial eligibility requirements at six hours had much higher rates of provider participation (30 percent of all participants in the first year) than those that required one to 12 ECE units (roughly 9 percent).

Most programs made it a priority in the second and third years to increase family child care provider participation, and administrative data suggest that they were largely successful – particularly San Luis Obispo County’s REWARD program (an increase from 16-percent to 29-percent provider participation in Year 2), and the Alameda County Child Development Corps (from 6-percent to 16-percent participation between Years 2 and 3). Along with extensive outreach, the decisive factor appeared to be the lowering of initial eligibility requirements.

Coursework and Training

1. Participants generally exceeded program requirements in the amount of education and training they received.

Almost all CARES/CRI program participants engaged in training of some kind over the two to three years after joining a program. While non-credit-bearing training was most common, 70 percent of participants also took at least one credit-bearing course over two years; in fact, the average participant completed seven units, or approximately two courses. PACE found especially strong involvement in new training opportunities among assistant and associate teachers and people of color.

2. There was consistent and strong evidence that participating in CARES/CRI programs leads to stronger involvement in professional development.

⁵ This represents the minimum level of eligibility allowed by the First 5 California guidelines. Lessons from CARES and Other ECE Workforce Initiatives in California, 1999-2004 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California at Berkeley
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After adjusting for a variety of personal and work characteristics, PACE found that program participants in San Mateo County accumulated an average of 5.7 more ECE units than non-participants staff in that county. Further, participants were three-and-a-half times more likely to obtain a new Child Development Permit, and twice as likely either to obtain a new Permit or to move up to a higher level on the Permit Matrix.

3. The design of the evaluation did not allow PACE to assess how different program models were related to better training and educational outcomes.

PACE reports in its findings that “across three measures of program design and implementation – toughness of eligibility requirements, intensity of training supports, and graduated stipend structure – training supports most effectively boosted training outcomes.” While this is certainly welcome news for program developers who provided a variety of training supports to participants, the evaluation as designed does not allow us to fully determine which specific program models were related to better training and educational outcomes. This is because, in its definition of “training supports” (which typically includes such efforts as professional growth advising, tutoring, or assistance with costs), PACE also included a variety of elements that some programs set as *requirements* for participation (such as training in the use of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale [ECERS], or attendance at Child Development Corps meetings).

4. Despite ongoing barriers and needs for improvement in county and state education and training systems, participants were highly motivated to pursue education and training.

In a variety of significant ways, CARES/CRI programs have not only promoted professional development in the ECE field, but have served as catalysts for identifying ongoing barriers in local training and education systems – highlighting needs for further improvement that were outside the scope of the CARES model itself. PACE reported that nearly two-thirds of participants reported facing barriers to training, with family child care providers consistently reporting more barriers than center-based staff. Most common among these were inconvenience of training times, lack of time off work, and the cost of courses.

Retention

For center-based staff, the PACE study examined the extent to which CARES/CRI program participants stayed in the ECE field, at their jobs, and in the CARES/CRI program itself.

1. The vast majority of program participants remained in the ECE field. Fully 96 percent of participants still worked in the field 12 months after joining the program, and 93 percent remained 18 months later.

Using data from San Mateo County, PACE focused its retention analysis on those CARES/CRI participants who had stayed in the field – a very high percentage. Somewhat misleadingly, however, the PACE report notes that “program participation was not associated with greater likelihood of remaining in the field, and participants consistently reported feeling dedicated to the ECE field regardless of whether or not they received a stipend.” But precisely because there were so few participants in the study who *had* left the field, it was impossible to determine whether there was a significant association or not between program participation and the likelihood of remaining in the field, once participants had left their particular jobs.

Further, it must be noted that CARES/CRI programs were created with the intention of addressing *job* turnover (staying in one’s present position or place of employment, or not), not *occupational* turnover (staying in the field or not) – so by the measure of finding 2, below, these programs can be considered highly successful. Further, as PACE notes, participants also stated that CARES/CRI programs were crucial in providing encouragement and boosting professional morale.

2. Among those remaining in the field (i.e., almost all staff included in the study), CRI participants were more than twice as likely to remain in the same center over a two-year period as were non-participants.

The PACE evaluation found high rates of center retention among CARES/CRI participants. Within the ten in-depth study counties, 80 percent remained in the same center over a two-year period. After adjusting for participant characteristics, program participants in San Mateo County were more than twice as likely to remain in their centers over a two-year period as were non-participants.

3. Across first-time participants in the in-depth study counties, approximately 68 percent returned to the program for a second year. Program retention rates were higher in programs with less demanding eligibility requirements.

Unfortunately, given the newness of the CARES/CRI effort, there is no clear way of knowing what a good rate of return might be for such a program. PACE did not measure third-year retention, but such information is available from selected county-based reports, described below.

Implications

In a summary of “implications for policymakers, program designers and the ECE field,” PACE highlighted the following frameworks and features of CARES/CRI programs:

- The issue of equitable participation by family child care providers is an ongoing concern; the most effective strategies were the lowering of entry-level requirements, and extensive outreach to providers.

- CARES/CRI programs were clearly effective in sparking a renewed interest in professional development among ECE practitioners.
- The quality of training and coursework offerings varied, and two strategies were most effective in addressing this issue: requiring participants to obtain a Child Development Permit, and requiring participation in professional growth advising.
- CARES/CRI programs actively sought to address local training barriers, and new collaborations between these programs and community colleges – notably in Alameda and Fresno Counties – were particularly effective.
- Among those who remained in the field after two years (i.e., nearly all staff included in the study), CARES/CRI program participants were more than twice as likely to remain in their centers as were non-participants.

Contra Costa County:

Early Childhood Education Professional Development Program (PDP)

First 5 Contra Costa contracted with Harder+Company Community Research to evaluate its \$7 million investment in programs and services to improve the lives of young children and their families in 2002-03. This evaluation included the third round of the Early Childhood Education Professional Development Program (PDP), which was modeled on the CARES initiative. Evaluation findings were based on an analysis of program administrative data collected from participants and a mail survey of participants. The mail survey assessed participants' opinions about the impact of the program, and was mailed to all Round 3 stipend recipients. Thirty-nine percent (n=336) of the participant population responded to the survey, representing only 20 percent of the overall group of participating providers across the three years. As noted by Harder+Company, "Most of the mail survey respondents (72%) had received a stipend from PDP prior to the third year; they identified themselves as 'returning' participants. Thus, this group is not representative of the overall population of stipend recipients." Despite the sample bias, the evaluators reached definitive conclusions about the impact of the PDP, which were then used to support a substantial reduction of the program budget and a redesign of its key elements, as described below.

Program Participants

The Contra Costa evaluation examined the difference among participants who received only one stipend and those who returned to receive two or three stipends, having met the state education requirements of the program. Differences based on percentages but not statistical tests indicated that returning participants were more likely to be white, to work in the central part of the county, to have longer tenure at their centers, and to earn higher wages (although still low) than other participants.

Impact on Retention and Professional Development

The evaluators based their conclusions on the results of the mail survey and participants' responses on a three-point Likert scale to the following statements (favorable response rates are reported in parentheses):

1. The stipend helped me to feel better about my job (87 %).
2. Participating in PDP improved my ability to work with children (71%).
3. I would not have taken the class without the stipend (45%).
4. The stipend kept me from leaving my job (36%).

Based on these respondents, the evaluators concluded that better morale, not retention, was the key outcome of the program. "Receiving a stipend had little relationship to retention in the field." The evaluation report, however, included no commentary or analyses about how improved morale and improved ability to do the job may impact retention.

In January 2004, the PDP changed focus, reshaping it to reward meeting certain professional development milestones. Program participants are now required to show proof of holding a Child Development Permit or to obtain their first permit in order to receive an initial stipend. All applicants who meet the qualifications receive \$750. Once they have become members of the PDP, participants receive additional stipends only when progressing to a higher level on the Permit Matrix, or (if staying at the same level) at their five-year permit renewal date. Maximum stipends have been reduced from \$3,500 to \$2,000, and First 5 reduced its allocation for the PDP by approximately 75 percent. An additional \$1 million, however, is being allocated to help programs to become accredited, and to assist providers with accommodating special needs children.

Fresno County:

Fresno County Comprehensive Staff Retention Project

The Fresno County Local Child Care Planning Council and the Fresno County Comprehensive Staff Retention Project (AB212/CARES) contracted with Dr. Ronald Unruh to conduct a mail survey in July 2002 of directors of child care centers where staff had received CARES stipends.⁶ Surveys were mailed to 219 directors, and 75 out of 211 eligible surveys (35%) were returned. Although the return rate was low, respondents were well distributed across communities in the county. The evaluator did not, however, analyze whether those who returned the surveys differed in any way from those who did not.

To ascertain the impact of the program on child care center staff stability, the survey asked directors to report on turnover and retention among stipend recipients. As a group, 92 percent remained at their jobs, with seven percent moving to a different work

⁶ AB212/CARES recipients also received a mail survey that captured their opinions about the program and reports of how they used the stipends. The results of this survey are not included in this report.

site but staying in the field, and only two percent leaving the field altogether. Directors also felt that the stipend program had made a positive impact on teacher skills (65 percent), teacher morale and self esteem (68 percent), and motivation to pursue education (81 percent).

***San Diego County:
San Diego CARES***

Health and Human Services Consultants of Southern California (Betty Bassoff, James Tatlow and Jennifer Tucker-Tatlow) conducted a series of analyses of administrative data and surveys which comprise the evaluation of the San Diego CARES program, including AB212 enrollees and those supported with First 5 dollars. This evaluation is focused primarily on whether San Diego CARES has contributed to staff stability and professional development among the program participants.

The evaluations assessed the following questions:

1. What are the barriers to professional development among providers and center staff who were accepted to and enrolled in the San Diego CARES program during the first and second years, but had not completed the requirements entitling them to receive stipend awards? This question was explored through a mail survey.
2. What are the effects of the program in terms of encouraging participants to pursue education and training, and to remain in their jobs?
3. What are their effects of the program on the quality and operation of ECE services?

Program Participants

Of the 587 individuals who had been accepted to and enrolled in San Diego CARES through First 5 Cares or AB212 funding, but had not received stipends, 246 (42 percent) returned a mail survey that posed several questions:

- whether participants wished to exit from the program;
- whether they were currently enrolled in college coursework likely to be completed during the current round of CARES funding;
- the number of professional growth hours they expected to complete during the current round of CARES funding;
- any barriers to participating in the program; and
- any suggestions on ways to assist their participation.

Seventy-one percent of survey recipients were drawn from the First 5-funded CARES program and 29 percent from AB212; they were drawn from across the county, with the largest cluster in the south and central regions. Among the First 5-funded CARES participants, 38 percent were family child care providers and the remainder

worked in a variety of types of centers. AB212 participants were drawn from centers, as dictated by the funding source.

The majority of respondents (First 5: 88 percent, and AB212: 92 percent) indicated that they did not wish to leave the program, even though they had yet to meet the requirements. Less than half (First 5: 41 percent, and AB212: 47 percent) indicated that they were currently enrolled in college coursework related to the Child Development Permit. Nearly three-quarters of those involved in course work were taking between three and 12 units. Nearly three-quarters of all respondents had been awarded Master Teacher Permits or higher, but only about one-quarter were currently working toward completing professional growth hours to receive a stipend award. When asked whether they planned to complete the educational requirements for a stipend in the coming round of funding, however, about three-quarters (74 percent) of First 5 and about four-fifths (85 percent) of AB212 participants indicated that they intended to do so. Survey respondents were also asked to identify barriers to their completion of educational requirements and to provide suggestions about what would assist them.

Overall, the picture that emerged was one of enrollees who are moving slowly through the CARES program, and who perceive many administrative, personal and coursework access barriers to more active participation. Conflicting work hours and personal family commitments were the most commonly reported barriers, but other issues included discomfort about attending school after a long absence or about completing the work, lack of student advising and career counseling, insufficient educational opportunities in the community (particularly in Spanish), and lack of transportation.

Participant suggestions reflected much of what the CARES program has been working on with community partners, including expanding access to workshops and classes, such as offering more night and weekend courses, online courses, and more financial support for tuition; improved information to applicants and enrollees, and targeted courses in areas of the county underserved by institutions of higher education.

Impact on Retention and Professional Development

Following San Diego CARES' first year of operation, the evaluators also conducted a survey of family child care and center-based participants, to examine the program's impact on retention and professional development among participants.

Of 437 surveys sent to the directors or site supervisors of all facilities employing first-year CARES participants, 38 percent (n=168) were returned. The evaluators did not provide an analysis of whether the responding centers differed systematically from non-responding centers, but did report that responding centers were well distributed across the field, representing all facility types in the county. Given the low response rate, the results should be interpreted with caution.

Sixty-nine percent of directors responding to the survey reported that the CARES program had had a noticeable impact on their centers, citing reduced staff turnover and

increased professional development as the primary changes. Average staff turnover in responding centers dropped from 18.5 to 13.3 after the first year of CARES. Directors cited inadequate pay as the most common reason for staff departures, suggesting that the CARES stipends, while providing some financial reward, are not able to fully address the low wages endemic to early care and education jobs. Ninety-nine percent of directors recommended the continuation of San Diego CARES, with their suggestions centering on better marketing and clarification of the program.

A survey was also sent to the 379 family child care providers who participated in the first year of San Diego CARES, and forty-nine percent (n=185) returned it. One hundred of these respondents operated small family child care homes (six to eight children), and 85 operated larger facilities (12 to 14 children). Although the evaluators presented no analyses of whether there were significant systematic differences between those who returned the surveys and those who did not, they noted that large family child care homes were over-represented in the sample. They speculated that this might be due to the CARES program's inclusion of assistants who work with licensed providers, and/or the possibly greater professional involvement and longer-term commitment to the field of those with larger business operations.

The majority of the family child care respondents had been in the field for more than five years, and more than one-quarter had been in operation for over ten years. Providers were evenly divided as to whether CARES had made an impact on their decision to stay in the field. Those who employ assistants were also asked about whether CARES had had an impact on retention of these employees. One-quarter (26 percent) of providers operating large homes providers reported that their assistants participated in CARES; although this sample is small, two-thirds (65 percent) agreed that CARES was a significant factor in their assistant's decision to remain on the job. Four-fifths (small homes, 82 percent; large homes, 80 percent) reported that CARES had had a noticeable impact on their program, particularly in the area of new ideas gained from courses and a greater sense of professionalism. Many providers also cited better morale and a greater feeling of being valued. Ninety-nine percent of providers recommended that CARES be continued. Their suggestions for improvements centered on ways to make the program more user-friendly, particularly around making educational opportunities more accessible.

The evaluation noted the success of the program in meeting its goals of lower turnover and greater professional development, particularly in light of the fact that the surveys were based on the start-up year, before the program reached maturity.

Other Impacts

A total of 890 names were randomly selected from the CARES data base of those considered to be current participants in Year 2 of the program (July 1, 2002-June 30, 2003). Each person received a survey through the mail and was asked to return it in a self-addressed stamped envelope; sixty percent (n=516) did so. The underlying assumption behind this investigation was that increased responsibility and pay would

contribute to workforce stability and a decrease in turnover. Twenty-one percent of respondents reported they had “moved up in responsibility” since their involvement in the CARES program. Twenty-three percent of participants, including half of the family child care providers, reported that they were earning more money than they had prior to their involvement in CARES. This survey also captured information about completion of course units, with an average of 11.33 units per respondent completed since they had begun the CARES program; for some, this included more than one year of participation. Among those completing professional growth hours (397 respondents), the average was 94 per respondent. The reported improvements in professional practices were in order of frequency of mention: curriculum, better understanding of child development, improved communication with children and parents, and improved teaching methods. Participants were also asked about improvement at their work site as a result of CARE participation. Eighty-nine percent of center participants, and 63 percent of family child care participants identified self-assessed improvements.

***San Francisco County:
San Francisco CARES and WAGES Plus***

The firm of LaFrance Associates, LLC, conducted an evaluation of San Francisco County’s two CRI programs, covering the three-year period of 2000 through 2002, in order to assess their effects on individuals and on San Francisco’s overall ECE community. In addition to San Francisco CARES, San Francisco County supports a program called WAGES Plus, which provides hourly wage supplements to child care teachers and support staff working in participating centers and homes. The evaluation sought to assess San Francisco CARES’ impact on professional development and retention, both as a freestanding program and in conjunction with Wages Plus.

LaFrance Associates distributed a multilingual survey to family child care providers, center site supervisors and center teaching staff throughout the county. Using lists provided by Community Care Licensing, the evaluators mailed a total of 2,844 surveys: 805 to owners of licensed family child care homes; 375 to the site supervisors of 375 licensed centers; and 1,664 to center teaching staff, an estimate based on these centers’ licensed capacity. Forty-three percent of surveys (n=1,224) were returned, with a 60-percent response rate from the estimated number of teaching staff, but only 25 percent from site supervisors and 17 percent from family child care providers.

While teaching staff represented 59 percent of the sample receiving the survey, they represented fully 80 percent of those who responded to it. Because of the low response rate from family child care providers and center administrators, we primarily report the findings that focus on center teachers. In situations where the data were not disaggregated, we warn that findings may be somewhat skewed in terms of job title.

Program Participants

The study developed “treatment” and “comparison” groups to examine differences between 1) those participating in San Francisco CARES, vs. those not

participating; 2) those participating in WAGES Plus, vs. those not participating; and 3) those participating in both programs, vs. in neither. Evaluators ensured the similarity of the treatment and comparison groups in terms of a variety of demographic and professional development characteristics.

Impact on Retention and Professional Development

Participants in San Francisco CARES were more likely than non-participants to have pursued training and education, to have taken unit-bearing courses, and to have been promoted. They also reported a greater increase in wages, although wage increases *per se* were not a goal of this professional development stipend effort.

Similarly, WAGES Plus was found to have a positive effect on wages (roughly 27 cents more per hour) and on professional development, with participants more likely to have pursued training and education, to have taken unit-bearing courses, and to have been promoted.

The evaluators' overall conclusion was that "not only do both the SF CARES and WAGES Plus strategies work, but also the programs complement rather than duplicate one another." The best outcomes were found for those who had participated in both programs – leading to the recommendation that in order to make the greatest impact, both programs merited continued support. Those who had participated in both programs were found to earn an average of \$1.03 more per hour than those who had taken part in neither; were roughly twice as likely to have been at their current workplace for more than one year, to plan to advance in field, and to plan to stay in field more than five years; and were over five times more likely to have pursued professional development activities, and over twice as likely to have taken unit-bearing courses.

Besides retaining both programs, other study recommendations included:

- sponsorship by the two programs of a strategic planning process for the local ECE community;
- continued work with City College of San Francisco and other educational institutions to increase access to needed courses and to career counseling for ECE students;
- connecting with potential recruits to the ECE field, including college and university students, at an earlier point in their careers;
- increased outreach and marketing of WAGES Plus, given that many beneficiaries of the program were unaware that they were part of it;
- a possible re-classification of the SF CARES stipends as one-time wage augmentations, in order to decrease the tax burden on recipients.

Part 4: Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Lessons Learned

In terms of the professional development of the early care and education workforce, the evaluations reviewed for this report strongly suggest that California's widespread CARES/CRI efforts have accomplished what they were intended for. They have motivated many practitioners, with a variety of characteristics, to become more engaged in their own professional development – whether as a reward for those already involved or as a motivator for those just starting on their way. Throughout the state, CARES/CRI program participants are attending training, taking unit-bearing classes, and in many cases, entering or advancing on the Child Development Permit Matrix.

Other questions, primarily about individual and organizational change, are still largely unanswered – namely, to what extent practitioners' own classroom behavior changed as a result of participating in CARES/CRI, and what observable impacts these initiatives had, if any, on ECE program quality. Further, it has not been determined to what extent this model is an efficient way to move a significant portion of the workforce toward attaining degrees and/or meeting other higher standards. This, of course, was not the original intention of the CARES/CRI initiatives, but in light of widespread discussion of Preschool For All for California, the attainment of degrees and/or credentials is likely to be a professional development focus in the coming years for many – but not all – in the ECE workforce.

In terms of retention, CARES/CRI programs also seem to have largely met expectations, keeping ECE practitioners on the job at much higher rates than is typical for the field. While some of this stability may also be due to a downturn in the California economy during this period, a lowering of teacher and provider turnover has been welcome news. Since most of the evaluation data gathered thus far is very short-term, it will be important to continue tracking the CARES/CRI programs over time to assess their longer-term effect on retention. In addition, some confusion has arisen in relation to the programs' own expectations about retention; some have expected participants to stay in their present jobs and/or in the ECE field, while others have focused on retaining them in the CARES/CRI program itself.

The evaluations reviewed for this report also shed light on a variety of challenges that CARES/CRI programs have faced. The programs have generally done a good job of reaching out to a diverse ECE community, and as time went on, have made important accommodations in order to reach those who are harder to serve. They have shown a willingness to adapt to the needs of their constituency, and to make changes that are useful to them and to the program itself over time. Still, these initiatives have not been as successful in recruiting family child care participants as they have been with center-based staff. This may be due in large part to the academic focus of this program model, which may still be less of a shared value in the home-based sector of the ECE field.

CARES/CRI programs have also had a major impact on other institutions in their communities – most notably, on community colleges, where an increased demand for classes has led to higher enrollments and, at times, some strain on capacity. Programs have also shown a willingness to work with existing institutions and to serve as catalysts for positive change; a primary example is the emergence of more career counselors and advisors, and other student supports, as an integral part of some CARES/CRI program models.

Implications for Future Research

CARES/CRI initiatives quickly spread throughout the state, and it is to the credit of their various funders that they supported a variety of process and outcome evaluation efforts. Any initiative, and particularly one as large as this, can benefit from an assessment of whether or not it meets its stated goals and the extent to which the program is working responsively and efficiently for participants. Given the variations on the CARES model that have been implemented in different counties, considerable interest in the pros and cons of various designs contributed to the importance of multi-county as well as sole-county investigations.

While the various evaluation efforts have contributed to a greater understanding of the CARES/CRI programs, this review has also revealed some limitations. Despite a great deal of cost and effort, there have not been as many answers generated by this body of research as might have been expected. One problem stemmed from the timing of the outcome evaluations. Process evaluations of a program can produce helpful results right away, often by identifying problems related to reaching potential participants (such as family child care providers), barriers to services relevant to the program (e.g., insufficient community college courses), and/or flaws in program design (e.g., the need for more support services to enable participants to succeed in college courses). And indeed, the implementation or process evaluations summarized here did reveal common issues across counties, which in many cases have been corrected as programs matured. Along with input from community forums, this information has helped programs adapt to meet participant and community needs, and identify issues that require greater collaboration or policy change.

By contrast, outcome evaluations are more problematic when they are begun shortly after program start-up. Typically, an evaluation should wait until the program has reached a certain level of maturity, with the major problems worked out and with a reasonable assurance that participants are having consistent experiences. Otherwise, it is often highly possible that evaluation findings will not truly reflect the program – an especially troubling situation if the results are strongly relied on by those making decisions about continued financial support (Gilliam, 2000; Gilliam, Ripple, Zigler & Leiter, 2000; Goodson et al., 2000).

The heavier reliance by outcome evaluations on quantitative data also raises issues related to research design. Surprisingly, many of the studies conducted at the county level by external evaluators fell short with regard to the rigor of their samples,

heavy reliance on self-reported data, and failure to submit findings to statistical tests. In addition to research protocol, some of the evaluations, including the statewide review by PACE, suffered from insufficient knowledge or clarity about the ECE field or the CARES model itself, leading to inaccurate conclusions or muddled findings. A lack of understanding of the complexity of turnover and the stated goals of the CARES/CRI model, for example, made findings about retention hard to decipher in the PACE and other studies. Further, insufficient attention to participant and program characteristics that are extremely sensitive to local conditions – such as wages – led to misleading impressions. In addition, a confusion in the PACE analysis about the difference between training supports and program requirements confounded the findings about the impact of various program designs.

Too often, programs that are evaluated early in their development, before they reach maturity, are not evaluated again, even after they go through major adaptations. It is to be hoped that this will not be the case with CARES/CRI programs and other professional development initiatives in California. But as these efforts increase across the state, it will be necessary to put mechanisms in place to ensure standard research protocols, avoid repetitious investigations, and truly advance our knowledge base. We offer the following recommendations:

- Strengthen support for a statewide administrative data base based on a common application process across counties, and invest in resources to generate local and statewide reports on participant activity and progress.
- Periodically conduct surveys among those *not* participating in CARES/CRI programs, to ascertain how or whether they might be encouraged to engage in professional development efforts. (Provide sufficient funding to support phone surveys in order to boost response rates).
- Revisit the issue of cost/benefit analyses of CARES/CRI programs, distinguishing among issues related to program administration, program design, cost per participant, and longitudinal benefits.
- Support studies with an observational component to examine:
 1. changes in teacher performance based on various educational inputs (e.g., number and duration of courses, course content, practicum experiences); and
 2. changes in program quality based on variations in the proportion of staff at a given center participating in CARES/CRI or other professional development efforts, and variations in the intensity of the efforts.

Conclusion

With the emergence of the CARES/CRI initiatives, the ECE terrain across California now looks very different after only a few years. Throughout the state, many more members of the workforce are engaged in their own professional development, increasingly in college-based courses and focused on advancing on the Child

Development Permit Matrix. New or expanded supports are in place for English language learners and working adults to make education more accessible. Awareness of the needs of family child care providers has increased, with many communities redesigning courses to make them more suited to home-based environments and offering them at more accessible times. While the majority of the workforce remains underpaid, the financial reward of receiving stipends has significantly boosted morale in the field and increased involvement in education and training. Prior to the CARES model, it was a struggle to establish the link between professional advancement and financial reward, but now the necessity of a strong economic investment in the ECE workforce is more widely understood, particularly since compensation in the field overall remains very low.

An unanticipated but important by-product of the CARES/CRI effort has been the emergence in almost every county of new experts keenly aware of the needs and challenges of the linguistically, culturally and educationally diverse ECE workforce. This is a highly committed group with creative ideas about how to make the institutions serving the ECE workforce more responsive. Perhaps most importantly, the CARES/CRI initiatives have drawn people together across the state who are committed to building more coherent professional development highways in California. In the process, they have helped to illuminate the roadblocks to educational advancement that were previously hidden from view, and to identify the needs of the many different “travelers” on the professional development path.

But it is not only that CARES/CRI programs have changed the landscape. The landscape is also changing these programs. Uncertain funding, a likely increase in teacher qualification standards with the emergence of Preschool For All, and the crisis in higher education all carry implications for the CARES/CRI effort. Additionally, the demand for more K-12 teachers – driven by high rates of retirement and the demands of the federal No Child Left Behind Act – also compete with efforts to build the early care and education workforce. At the state and county levels there is awareness of this shifting ground, and efforts are under way to adapt CARES/CRI to new circumstances while maintaining its important facilitative function for members of the ECE workforce.

Early in 2004, a group of “Bay Area CARES Stakeholders” released a paper delineating both the challenges facing CARES/CRI programs and the important roles they might play in addressing them (Burton, 2004). The California First 5 Commission is currently considering whether to continue its matching grant program beyond 2005, and is proposing a number of changes to its initiative, including a possible name change for CARES to “Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards,” as well as the delineation of multiple CARES “tracks,” with varying requirements depending on the characteristics of recipients.

The California First 5 Commission will also be convening a statewide Blue Ribbon Committee on Workforce Development in 2005-06 to address several underlying statewide policy issues related to the ECE profession, such as the alignment and updating of course requirements and certification, articulation among institutions of higher

education, appropriate supports to build a culturally and linguistically diverse ECE workforce that is reflective of California's children and families, and compensation.

These developments hold out considerable hope for systematic change in the way that California trains and prepares the educators of its youngest children. Perhaps most importantly, CARES/CRI programs have led the way by firmly linking professional development and financial reward – reinforcing a growing recognition that without such a linkage, we may well continue to train substantial numbers of practitioners who leave the ECE field for better opportunities elsewhere.

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For Further Information

Contact information for local CARES/CRI programs is available through:

Working for Quality Child Care
United Way of the Bay Area
CARES/CRI Training and Technical Assistance Project
221 Main Street, Suite 300
San Francisco, CA 94105
(415) 808-7327
<http://cares.w4qcc.org/>
http://www.uwba.org/uw_impact/w4cc/w4qcc_about.htm.

Evaluation reports from PACE are available at:

Policy Alternatives for California Education (PACE)
University of California, Berkeley
School of Education
3653 Tolman Hall
Berkeley, CA 94720-1670
(510) 642-7223
<http://pace.berkeley.edu>.

CARES/CRI County Evaluations Completed as of Fall 2004

COUNTY	TYPE OF EVALUATION		DATA SOURCE			
	PACE Evaluation	Other Evaluation I = Internal E = External	Participant Survey	Administrative Participant Database	Focus Group	Key Informant Interviews
Alameda ^{2,3}	X		X			X
Amador/Calaveras		I	X			
Butte ²	X		X			
Contra Costa ⁴		E	X	X		X
Fresno ²	X	E	X			
Humboldt		I		X		
Marin*		E		X	X	
Mendocino		I				
Monterey*		E	X		X	X
Napa ¹	X		X			
Riverside ²	X		X			
San Diego		E	X	X	X	
San Francisco ³	X	E	X		X	X
San Luis Obispo	X					
San Mateo ²	X	I	X	X		
Santa Clara		I		X		
Santa Cruz		I	X			
Siskiyou	X					
Solano		I	X	X		
Stanislaus ²	X	I	X			
Sutter*		E	X	X		
Ventura	X					

* – Excluded from review. ¹ PACE Phase 1 in-depth county. ² PACE Phase 2 in-depth county. ³ PACE case studies. ⁴ – Participated in two external evaluations: one described in this report, and the other (AB212) not available for review by fall 2004.

Note: Thirteen additional county evaluations were not available for review by fall 2004 (Imperial, Inyo, Merced, Orange, Placer, Plumas, San Joaquin, Santa Barbara, Shasta, Sierra, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba).

