

**CHANGES IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT:
CHRONICLING CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS
IMPROVEMENTS IN CALIFORNIA
November 2003 to September 2006**

FINAL REPORT

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Marguerite Casey Foundation

By

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We would like to thank each one of you publicly but we promised you anonymity. However, you know who you are and to you we want to say how grateful we are for your many thoughtful and insightful contributions to this project. Thank you.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In mid 2003, the Department of Social Services and county child welfare Directors were preparing to implement major changes to California's child welfare system. These changes sought to improve the system by strengthening families and making prevention services available before child abuse/neglect begins, providing more appropriate services to families by partnering with communities, families and youth, and to make the entire system more fair and equitable. This huge statewide effort was to be overseen and supported by a Public-Private Partnership (P-PP) between the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the Foundation Consortium for California's Children & Youth (Consortium).

The Marguerite Casey Foundation funded the Consortium to support activities related to this effort in three areas: a) training, b) strategic communications, and c) partnership building, and the National Health Foundation to chronicle the challenges, successes and failures of P-PP. The three years of chronicling began in late 2003 just as, for the first time in the State's history, the Governor of California was recalled. Thus, rather than simply documenting P-PP's implementation successes and failures, the chronicling also documented the consequences of major, unanticipated public partner changes and the private partner's response to them. The most important consequences, and the lessons learned from them, can be summarized as follows:

MCF funding impacts?

- a. *Training.* MCF funds were used to support the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) and the Fiscal Strategies Initiative (FSI). BSC had a huge overall affect on change implementation, while the outcomes from FSI funding were more subtle. For example:
- BSC training, because it was the only training focused on implementing the recommendations generated by the CWS Stakeholders Group during the long administration transition, maintained the momentum that had evolved over the three year Redesign planning process. Most of the Cohort 1 counties reported that without BSC they would not have been able to implement Differential Response (DR). Implementing DR combined with a statewide, standardized safety assessment system and community involvement has led, in many counties to a redefinition of child safety as no longer automatically equaling child removal.
 - P-PP was able to leverage the \$100,000 of MCF funds dedicated to FSI into a \$430,000 contract by drawing federal matching funds and resources from other state agencies and foundation. As a result of FSI training, knowledge about the innovative and creative strategies different counties had developed for accessing different funding streams and about ways to maximize the ways specific funding streams could be used was shared across counties. Such

- knowledge transfer was extremely important given the high retirement and turnover rate among CDSS and county fiscal staffs.

b. *Strategic communications.* These funds were used to hire a seasoned professional who worked with the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) and its committees, CDSS and the Consortium. Together their efforts had the most profound impact on California's child welfare system. For example:

- Child Welfare Services received an increase of approximately \$200 million in its 2006 budget. State- and county-level observers of and participants in this process reported that P-PP's communications work was directly responsible for this. They also acknowledged the work of various advocacy groups and one State legislator in particular, but everyone agreed that the communications work that had been started in 2003 had allowed them to "hit the ground running" because it had laid the groundwork for the powerful child welfare services voice present throughout the budget process.
- This work also professionalized counties' use of communications. It showed them the importance of public relations and has changed how counties talk about child welfare to their local leaders and community.

c. *Community partnering.* These funds were directed towards bringing about changes at the state- and county-levels; county-level changes were major, while the impacts at the State level are unclear. Examples of county-level impacts include:

- As a result of the Redesign development process and the P-PP's and Consortium's work over the last six years, partnering has become integrated in to the way local child welfare services agencies now think about doing their work, and partnerships are flourishing in most Cohort 1 counties.
- As a result of the administration change and a re-orientation of Redesign activities, the Consortium did not use all of its MCF community partnering funds. When the Consortium closed in December 2005, these funds, with MCF's agreement, were rolled over to help establish an advocacy organization for family resource centers called the California Family Resource Association.

Lessons learned?

Given an administration change that was both unprecedented and sudden and a new administration's abandonment of the previous administration's initiatives, many people did not expect redesign implementation to survive. But it did; not on as grand a scale as originally envisioned, but at least three of the most important components of the original remained. Without the Consortium being involved (that is, without MCF funding), the child welfare services changes brought about since the administration change probably would not have happened. There is no doubt that the private sector partner was responsible for bringing about or helping to bring about the changes that have occurred. As a result, several lessons for funders and others interested in changing large systems through public-private partnerships have been learned. They can be summarized as follows:

1. *Inclusive, vision-driven planning pays off.* Long-term and major changes in operations and policy are more likely to occur if they are implemented according

to a set of values which have emerged from inclusive and comprehensive discussions.

2. *Flexibility is essential.* To help bring about major, long-term change, both the funder and those funded must be extremely flexible in how funds are spent and what is undertaken.

3. *A “third voice” can have enormous value.* In a State supervised/County administered child welfare system, the relationship between the two can be tense. A flexibly- and sufficiently-funded “third voice” can mitigate this tension by bringing an outside, balanced, view. This often means promoting the counties’ perspective, but it also means helping the state to leverage funding, educate legislators, and generally helping state government not to be its own worst enemy.

4. *A private sector partner can provide stability in a changing political environment.* With the administration change, acting child welfare staff was appointed but the Department was left without a permanent director for almost one year. Throughout this time, the Consortium continued to support and promote the training counties needed to implement the improvements, and to provide communications support.

5. *The private sector partner must have the right kind of experience.* The Consortium was the best kind of private sector partner. Its director had extensive experience with public-private partnerships and had worked for government and the project manager had worked with and for state and local governments and foundations. In addition, the Consortium had been established to work through public-private partnerships. Thus, not only were its staff committed to partnering, its culture had evolved to nurture collaboration. The Consortium’s commitment to and experience with relationship building and partnering were seen in many different attitudes and skills and were particularly important during the early months of the transition.

6. *The strategic communications component of the MCF grant was essential to the project’s success.* Having a strategic communications plan, meant that when the P-PP was asked to join other large-scale, funded projects, it knew exactly which plan activities could be supported by the new funds. Without such a plan, the communications works would have been less focused and coordinated and probably would not have been successful. The Consortium also hired a seasoned communications professional who understood what was needed, how to build on what was already occurring, and who was willing to push people beyond their comfort zones to clarify assumptions and expectations across organizations.

Summary

There is no question that through its grant to the Foundation Consortium for California’s Children & Youth, Marguerite Casey Foundation constructively affected the implementation of child welfare services improvements in California. The entire Redesign vision has not been, and may never be, met but many important parts of it remain and are being put into action. Child welfare social workers are developing more nuanced and sophisticated approaches to assessing how to meet families’ needs, and child welfare administrators are using data to improve services and educate local leaders. California’s children and families can only benefit from such improvements.

I. INTRODUCTION

In mid 2003, the Department of Social Services and County Child Welfare Directors were preparing to implement major changes to California's child welfare system. These changes sought to improve outcomes for children by strengthening families and making prevention services available before child abuse/neglect began, providing more appropriate services to families by partnering with communities, families and youth, and to make the entire system more fair and equitable. This was a huge statewide effort that was to be overseen and supported by a public private partnership between the California Department of Social Services and the Foundation Consortium for California's Children & Youth. In late 2003, for the first time in the State's history, the Governor of California, was recalled. Appointed staff at CDSS left and the County Directors and Consortium waited to see who would replace them. This report describes the events that followed and were documented by an outside "chronicler." It begins by providing background information on relevant events and the primary players. Most discussion focuses on presenting what was observed by attending relevant meetings and learned through semi-structured interviews between January 2004 and December 2006. This information is presented from the perspective of the effectiveness of a large grant from one foundation to support the public-private partnership efforts to bring about system-wide change. The report ends by presenting some "lessons learned" for philanthropy.

II. BACKGROUND

Assessing the effectiveness of a large grant for a complex project in a highly charged political-economic environment is extremely challenging. With many levels of decision-making and multiple actors, conditions and events cannot be described in detail. However, as with all social action, specific details can be extremely significant. This section of this report provides the details relevant to understanding the history and context within which the chronicling occurred. The information is presented under four headings: A) Historical overview; B) Organizations involved; C) Timeline and D) Context as of October 2003.

A. Historical overview

In 1999, during his first year as Governor, Gray Davis asked his Director of Social Services to address the issue of improving the foster care system. At her recommendation, he included a major, long-range reform effort in his 2000 budget. The California legislature agreed to fund this budget item and established a three-year process and a Child Welfare Services (CWS) Stakeholders Group to examine the child welfare services system and recommend improvements. This broad-based group of more than 60 members began meeting in September 2000. By May 2002, it published the conceptual framework for a redesigned system, including a new vision, mission, and guiding values. Later in 2002, its second year report included 30 major strategies through which outcomes for California's children and families could be improved. The reform effort came to be known as the "Redesign".¹

¹ Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group, *CWS Redesign: The Future of California's Child Welfare Services, Final Report*, State of California, September 2003. See Attachment A.

Also during this time, two other important changes took place. In 2001, the federal government implemented a new approach to monitoring state child welfare systems. California's federal Child and Family Services Review was conducted in September 2002 and, like all other states, California failed in several areas and was required to develop a Program Improvement Plan (PIP). Also in 2001, the California Legislature passed the Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability Act (AB 636), which built upon the standards established by the federal government and added other measures. AB 636 also created an ongoing data collection and planning process, unique to California, through which the state and counties would work together to monitor and improve outcomes for children and families through each county's System Improvement Plan (SIP). Both the Outcomes and Accountability Workgroup, which developed the indicators of child safety, permanence and well-being that California's system would measure, and the workgroup that developed the PIP, included many CWS Stakeholders Group members. This ensured a high level of consistency across the three efforts.

For many years, private sector philanthropy had played an important role in the child welfare field, and California's reform efforts drew the attention of local and national foundations. In 1991, foundations in California had created the Foundation Consortium through which they could pool funds for statewide projects of mutual interest. As a result, philanthropy was poised to be a central partner in the planning and implementation of the child welfare reforms that were, to a large extent, built on the success of foundation-funded experiments, both in California and across the nation.

B. Organizations Involved in CWS Improvements

Seven organizations (two of which are closely linked) and CWS Departments in 11 counties are the primary actors in this report. Brief descriptions of them are presented in the following order: 1) California Department of Social Services, 2) County Welfare Directors Association of California, 3) Cohort 1 Counties, 4) Foundation Consortium for California's Children & Youth, 5) Casey Family Programs and Marguerite Casey Foundation, and 6) The California Endowment.

1. California Department of Social Services (CDSS)

As one of the 14 departments and programs in the Health and Human Services Agency, CDSS is responsible for a

“mission of providing aid, services and protection to needy children and adults. At the same time, the Department strives to strengthen and encourage individual responsibility and independence for families. By managing and funding its programs, the objectives of the Department are carried out through the 4,200 employees located in 51 offices throughout the state, the 58 county welfare departments, offices and a host of community-based organizations.” (See http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/AboutCDSS_2321.htm)

Its responsibilities include managing child and adult protective services programs and such direct aid as Food Stamps, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and foster care. California is one of 11 states in which these programs are administered by local county governments and supervised by the state agency. Such systems set up complex sets of state-local relationships, funding, and accountability.

2. County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA)

The County Welfare Directors Association of California is a non profit association representing the human service directors from each of California's 58 counties. CWDA's mission is to promote a human services system that encourages self-sufficiency of families and communities, and that protects vulnerable children and adults from abuse and neglect. It works through a structure of 13 Policy Committees that identify and analyze issues, and that develop program and policy recommendations for consideration by its Board of Directors. Some of these Committees also work with state agencies to develop and implement program services. The Committees are constituted from county staffs that have responsibilities in the specific program areas. Thus, the Children's Services Committee is made up of high level county staff with Child Welfare responsibility and the Public Awareness and Education Committee is made up largely of county Public Information Officers and other staff with communications responsibilities. These two committees, in addition to CWDA's Board of Directors, had the most direct involvement with the other organizations involved in implementing the CWS reforms. (See <http://www.cwda.org/aboutCWDA.htm>)

3. Cohort 1 Counties

In September 2003, after a competitive process in which almost half of California's counties applied, 11 counties were chosen by CDSS to be part of the first cohort of counties to receive state support for implementation of the Child Welfare Redesign. These counties were chosen based on a set of criteria that had been established in partnership with CWDA and the Consortium, and were part of an overall implementation plan that included four groups, or cohorts, of counties. As the most populous county in the state, Los Angeles was required by the federal PIP to be part of Cohort 1. Beyond that, the mix included large, small, urban and rural counties from most regions of the state. The Cohort 1 group was known by many names over time; its counties became the test sites for the improvements and leaders in determining what changes were possible with existing resources. After the recall, the new administration continued funding the Cohort 1 counties as pilot sites and partners in policy development. It also continued the existing Small Counties Initiative (Cohort 2) which used federal funding to build community capacity, such as Family Resource Centers in the smallest counties (populations of < 70,000). Cohort 3 was made up of the other counties that had applied for Cohort 1, and Cohort 4 counties were those who took more of a "wait and see" attitude towards Redesign implementation.

4. Foundation Consortium for California's Children & Youth (Consortium)

In 1991, eight foundations united by the desire to improve the lives of California's children, youth and communities agreed to pool funds and establish the Foundation Consortium (later renamed Foundation Consortium for California's Children & Youth). This Consortium was to act as a non-partisan resource bringing philanthropy together with communities, schools and government to improve public policy and practice primarily through public-private partnerships. Each member foundation was represented on the Consortium's Governing Board and agreed that the organization's work would be guided by the following values: focusing on the whole child; including families, youth and service providers in decision making; holding everyone accountable by appropriate data use; being

flexible and willing to change funding mechanisms; and seeking and growing the “champions” essential to long-term change. By 2004, 23 foundations were members of the Consortium, and it had developed a solid history of partnerships focused on creating environments in which children would be “safe, healthy and learning each day.”

5. *Casey Family Programs (CFP) and Marguerite Casey Foundation (MCF)*

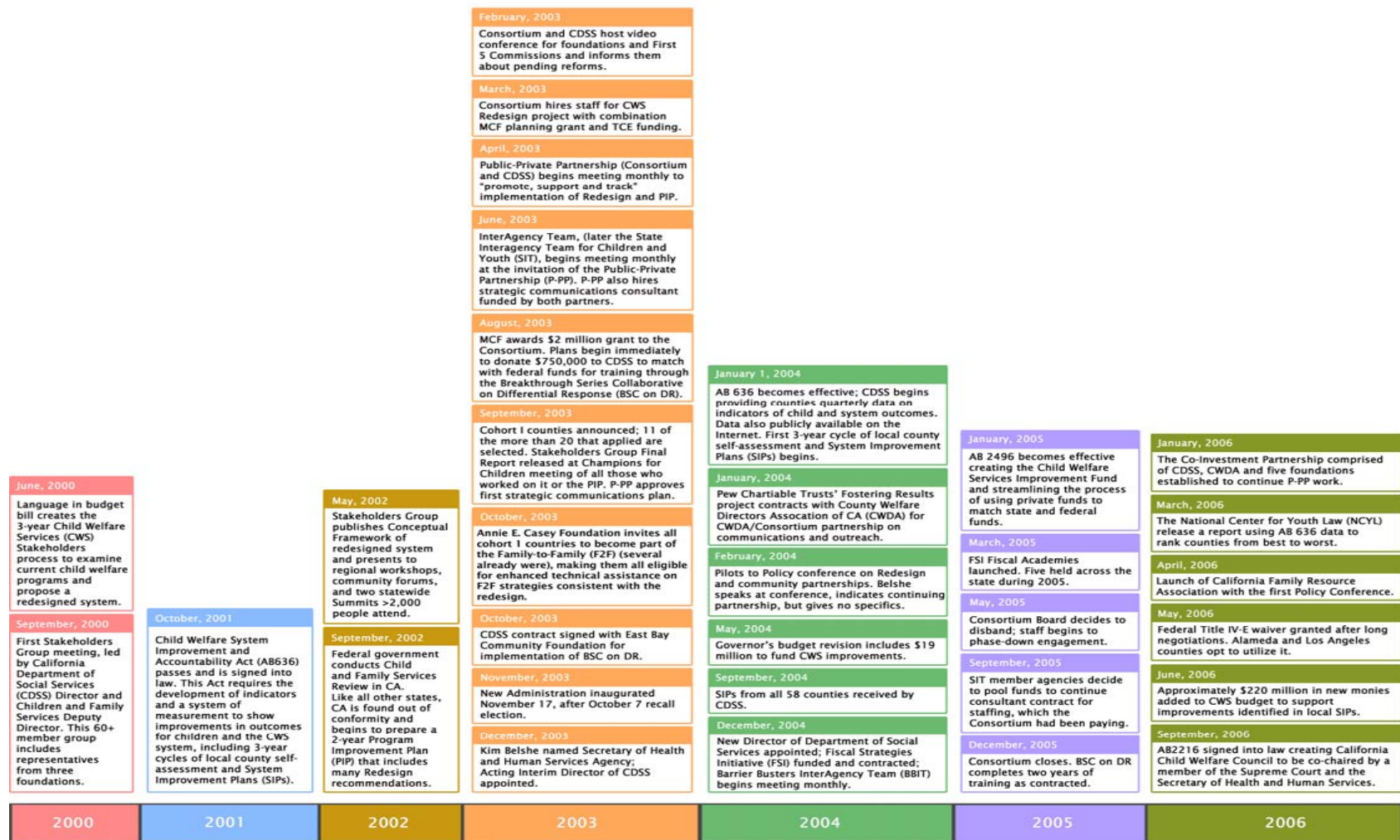
Casey Family Programs is a large national operating foundation with offices in several states, including California. It became a member of the Consortium in 2000 and was one of three foundations invited to participate on the original CWS Stakeholders Group because of its focus on improving foster care and child welfare systems. In 2001, CFP created a new grant making organization, the Marguerite Casey Foundation, to help expand its outreach and further enhance its 40-year record of leadership in family well-being.

One of the strategies MCF developed to accomplish its mission was to “examine, inform and change social and economic policies and practices so that they promote the development of strong families and strong communities.” MCF was also interested in investing in system change and cross-system change. Supporting the high-quality implementation of California’s Redesign was thus not only consistent with MCF’s mission, but also provided a good opportunity to collaborate with its sister foundation, CFP, and other California funders. MCF funded the Consortium to support Redesign implementation through public-private partnerships and also funded the National Health Foundation (NHF) to chronicle the actions, successes and failures of this work.

6. *The California Endowment (TCE)*

As a founding member of the Consortium and a member of the CWS Stakeholders Group, The California Endowment strongly supported philanthropy’s role in ensuring that the Child Welfare Redesign was implemented in accordance with the Consortium’s values. TCE had been asked to join the Stakeholders’ Group part way through its three year process, when another foundation shifted its priorities from child welfare. In late 2002, TCE participated in discussions about the potential involvement of the Consortium in Redesign implementation, and in early 2003, in addition to its regular contribution to the Consortium’s pooled fund, TCE provided targeted funding for a position specifically to lead a public-private partnership on the Child Welfare Redesign.

C. CWS Improvements Timeline, June 2000 to September 2006



D. CWS Improvements' Context as of October 2003

Chronicling the implementation of California's CWS Improvements started in October 2003, and this section provides details on the programmatic and fiscal environments within which it began. This information is provided in four sections. The first outlines the improvements' objectives as delineated in the Redesign final report. The second briefly explains the origin of the Public-Private Partnership. The next presents the activity areas supported by MCF funding, and the final section describes the P-PP activities undertaken prior to the chronicling.

1. CDSS Redesign

The CWS Redesign Final Report sought to fundamentally transform child welfare services in California through an integrated set of policy shifts, practice improvements, re-alignments of partners, systems and communities, and new accountability structures. It also sought to create a more prevention-oriented and flexible policy and funding framework. The recommended practice changes were based, in part, on taking to scale smaller, successful efforts in California and other parts of the nation. Partnerships with other public agencies, service providers, community organizations, and parents were viewed as essential to bringing about the desired changes at all levels. Finally, the new state accountability system (AB 636) would, for the first time, offer CDSS and County child welfare offices quarterly outcomes data so they would know whether and how they were achieving targeted results for children and families.

This huge goal of transforming child welfare services was to be achieved through nine distinct values-based objectives summarized in communication materials as follows:

- Objective One: Partner to PREVENT child abuse and neglect: Building a prevention system
- Objective Two: Act early to PRESERVE and strengthen families: early intervention/new intake structure
- Objective Three: Broaden efforts to RESTORE family capacity and provide PERMANENCY
- Objective Four: Strengthen alternatives to REBUILD permanent families for children
- Objective Five: Systematically PREPARE youth for success in adulthood.
- Objective Six: AFFECT CHANGE through workforce excellence
- Objective Seven: STRENGTHEN interagency partnerships at the State and local levels
- Objective Eight: EXPAND and RESTRUCTURE child welfare financing
- Objective Nine: ACHIEVE better outcomes through accountability

Objectives One through Five related directly to the families and children receiving services, while Objectives Six through Nine related to the child welfare services system.

2. Public-Private Partnership

In April 2003, the Consortium and CDSS formed the Public-Private Partnership (P-PP) to "promote, support and track the implementation of the CWS Redesign, as

outlined by the Stakeholders Group and in the [federally required] Program Improvement Plan.” This Partnership consisted of the Directors and senior staff of the two organizations, who, in monthly meetings, developed strategies to support county implementation of the Redesign. P-PP members were also involved in workgroups with county representatives in which practical implementation guidelines and plans were being further clarified.

3. MCF Funding

In August 2003, MCF awarded the Consortium a \$2 million grant to support the implementation of Redesign reforms in four major areas:

- i. Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Community-based Child Welfare and Differential Response
- ii. Financing Seminar
- iii. Strategic Communications
- iv. Community Partnerships for Results

Two areas (Breakthrough Series Collaborative and the Financing Seminar) related to training, while the other two related to promoting knowledge about the improvements (Strategic Communication) and to bringing about the improvements through partnering and relationship building (Community Partnerships)

As a learning organization, MCF had many questions about the project in which it had invested. For example, how would such a high level partnership function? What challenges would it face? What specific successes would it have? How can a private sector entity help government achieve system level change?

In order to increase its understanding of the P-PP, and particularly the Consortium’s (philanthropy’s) activities in it, MCF funded the National Health Foundation (NHF) to systematically document these activities. This “chronicling” included observing P-PP meetings, monitoring formal P-PP communications, and semi-structured interviews every eight months with state- and county-level representatives.

4. Early P-PP Activities

During 2003, before NHF’s chronicling began, the P-PP had taken several major steps towards achieving specific outcomes in what would, by early 2004, become its official Scope of Work. These activities included:

- *Setting up county cohorts:* Established a phased approach to implementation by identifying four groups of counties (called Cohorts). Eleven counties were selected as Cohort I (known as the “early implementers”) based on interest, readiness and an application and review process.²
- *Setting up a cross-departments team:* Established the Interagency Child Welfare Team (IAT), consisting of Deputy Director level staff representing

² After these counties were selected, the Annie E. Casey and Stuart Foundations invited those that were not already part of the national Family-To-Family Initiative to join. Thus, all the Cohort 1 counties also received the technical assistance and training offered through Family-To-Family, which was consistent with the redesign strategies.

- twelve major departments and programs with shared populations. The IAT charge was to improve the coordination of policy, services and funding for children, youth and families, and to provide leadership and guidance that would facilitate counties' implementation of the systems improvements.
- *Beginning strategic communications:* Hired a communications consultant and developing a strategic communications plan, which included the coordinated launch of the implementation phase.
 - *Introduced new training:* Launched a major training and technical assistance process—the Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Differential Response (BSC on DR). BSC on DR funding was a blend of private, state and federal funds and was the first time that the state had used private funds as the match for federal Title IV-E funds. A separate, non-profit was contracted to operate the BSC, and staff was hired to administer it under the guidance of a “Leadership Team” that included the P-PP. The 2 ½ year, \$2.9 million training contract started in October 2003, making it one part of implementation that was continued through the administration change that was to come.
 - *Testing new funding mechanism:* Worked to develop a simplified “policy and implementation mechanism to allow private funds to be donated to the State and used as a match for federal Title IV-E training funds to support implementation of the Redesign.” Bureaucratic requirements and misunderstandings that surfaced during the contracting for the BSC on DR made it clear that streamlined processes and clear information were necessary if this was to be used more often.³

While implementation plans were being finalized, there was an abrupt change in the State's administration due to a successful recall election in October 2003. Given the State's budget crisis, child welfare reform was not high on the new administration's priority list. Also the interim leadership that was appointed had not been involved in the long planning process and did not understand or agree with the Redesign's focus on prevention, community partnerships and strengthening families. Their approach to the State's role in child welfare was more compliance-driven. In their view, child safety appeared to be under-valued in the Redesign report.

III. WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN NOVEMBER 2003 AND OCTOBER 2006?

NHF's chronicling began in November 2003 with a Theory of Change process, also funded by MCF, to help focus the chronicling activities and to identify activities for which P-PP would hold itself accountable. While the results of this process were being refined, in January 2004, the new Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, presented his first budget to the Legislature. This section begins by presenting issues surrounding 'Administration Transition Difficulties' (A). This is followed by findings from NHF's chronicling that focused on P-PP activities and Cohort 1 counties' perception of them between November 2003 and October 2006. The findings are presented under four headings: B) P-PP Scope of Work, (C) Training

³ These issues also tested the willingness of P-PP members to stand by their commitments in the face of obstacles. In this case, the obstacles lost.

(which includes two of four MCF-funded task areas—Breakthrough Series Collaboratives and Financial Seminar), D) Communications Strategy, and E) Community Partnerships. Discussions of each of the four MCF-funded areas end with NHF’s assessment of the impact of MCF’s funding in that task area.

A. Administration Transition Difficulties

Immediately following the change in administrations, an extremely difficult budget process began which consumed the time and energy of all CDSS staff. They went into the budget process with the legislature questioning the \$19 million that was designated for beginning Redesign implementation. At first, the CDSS representative at a budget hearing appeared to back away from the reform plan, which caused much concern about the new administration’s intent. This worry was reinforced when CWS appeared to be left deliberately leaderless.

The County Welfare Directors Association stepped in as a major champion of reform and of the \$19 million to begin implementation. CWDA and CDSS agreed to narrow implementation plans so that the early focus would be on helping the Cohort 1 counties to further test and implement specific strategies associated with 1) statewide safety and risk assessment, 2) differential response, and 3) permanency and transition for foster youth. As the new administration became convinced that some CWS improvements were necessary because of the federal mandates in the PIP and the new state accountability system, they realized that the strategies outlined in the Redesign were among the best available to reach those goals.

However, the term Redesign was perceived as too closely associated with the Davis administration. There were many discussions about how to talk about the proposed changes and the communications consultant began to earn the trust of the new partnership members as she assisted with this process. The result was a new communications approach that became: “There’s a new accountability system in the state (AB 636), we want to move to better outcomes (as delineated in the PIP), and here are some strategies that should help us do that (from the Redesign).” This showed how all three efforts related to each other and also made the reform effort more universal, since all counties were required to implement the new accountability system and to achieve the new outcomes.

B. P-PP’s Scope of Work

In late 2003 while the previous administration’s staff was still in place, CDSS, the Consortium and representatives from several counties went through a Theory of Change process to guide the development of the P-PP’s Scope of Work.⁴ This process focused on the Redesign objectives pertaining to system-level changes (Objectives Six through Nine). The Theory of Change process involves identifying the preconditions necessary to achieve the objectives and the strategies through

⁴ Given the complexity and comprehensiveness of the Redesign, the chronicling activities needed to be focused. Rather than leaving this decision to the chronicler, MCF funded this process so that the P-PP could help direct that focus. The Consortium also used this opportunity to involve counties and other representatives in a discussion about P-PP responsibilities.

which to establish the preconditions. This work group carefully reviewed the Redesign strategies and identified at least eleven overarching state-level activities/responsibilities that were necessary if counties were to successfully achieve Objectives Six through Nine. These activities/responsibilities were then prioritized and the P-PP agreed that its Scope of Work (SOW) would focus on achieving the top six.

Thus the P-PP’s SOW and the focus of NHF’s chronicling activities were based on the following state-level activities/responsibilities:

1. Providing leadership on the safety of children
2. Obtaining flexible and new funding
3. Creating and maintaining partnerships
4. Assuring counties are held accountable
5. Providing/facilitating training and technical assistance
6. Providing communications training and technical assistance and developing a statewide strategic communications plan.

As already discussed, MCF’s funding was dedicated to four topics. The table below shows how work on the P-PP objectives related to MCF’s funding areas. Strong, primary relationships are indicated by “√” while less direct relationships are indicated by an “X.”

MCF Funding P-PP Scope of Work	<i>Breakthrough Series Collaborative</i>	<i>Financing Seminar</i>	<i>Strategic Communications</i>	<i>Community Partnerships For Results</i>
1. Providing Leadership on the Safety of Children	√		√	
2. Obtaining Flexible Funding and Fiscal Support		√		
3. Creating and Modeling Partnerships	X		X	√
4. Providing Training and Technical Assistance	√	√	X	X
5. Holding Counties Accountable	X		√	
6. Providing Communications Training and Technical Assistance and Developing a Statewide Communications Plan	X		√	

The remainder of this section is organized around the four Marguerite Casey Foundation funded topics. Most discussion focuses on the primary relationships between these topics and the P-PP Scope of Work, i.e., cells with a “√”. Where appropriate, examples are provided for indirect relationships under that topic (“X” cells).

C. Training

In operationalizing the MCF funded activities, the P-PP undertook two major training programs that together addressed many objectives in the P-PP's Scope of Work.

1. Breakthrough Series Collaborative for Community-Based Child Welfare and Differential Response

The Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Differential Response (BSC on DR) primarily related to Objective #4 of the P-PP's SOW (Providing Training & TA). However, it was also relevant to four other P-PP objectives (#1, #3, #5, and #6). The following discussion briefly describes the distinctive aspects of these activities and presents counties' views of them. It ends with a review of the impact of MCF funding.

Casey Family Programs (CFP) had pioneered using the Breakthrough Series Collaborative method (started with great success in the health field) in child welfare and, with the Redesign, saw an opportunity to work jointly with Marguerite Casey Foundation and to collaborate with the Consortium and CDSS. Through this collaboration, a Breakthrough Series Collaborative specifically tailored to the implementation of Community Based Child Welfare and Differential Response in California counties was developed. The BSC on DR was implemented much as described in the Consortium's original MCF proposal. It provided training and technical assistance to support an intensive change process that assisted and accelerated counties' efforts to redesign their intake, response and early intervention systems, i.e., to implement Differential Response (DR).

DR is an evolution of child welfare practice that has shown promise in a number of states and represents a growing movement to provide services to children and families at the earliest signs of trouble. In California, DR includes a broader set of responses to families who are referred to child protective services--three paths to ensuring child safety. All these paths include engaging families whenever possible to help identify solutions to the issues they face and involve greater reliance on collaboration between child welfare agencies, other public agencies, and community organizations.

The effort to provide consistent training and technical assistance to 43 counties as they implemented the new intake structure was unprecedented in its scope and in its funding. It was unprecedented in scope as the first time the BSC approach had been used by a state to help implement a major CWS policy change. The funding was unprecedented because, for the first time, the state used a philanthropic donation to match federal funding. The donation of \$750,000 from the MCF grant was used as the match for federal funding and leveraged additional state funding to create a 2 1/2 year, \$2.9 million training contract. This contract spanned two administrations and some major adjustments were required half way through to maintain its relevance as the political environment shifted. This was accomplished in a manner that modeled flexible funding and a flexible partnership with Marguerite Casey Foundation, the Consortium, and CDSS all acting on their commitments to fully meet the needs of those with whom they were working and partnering.

Work in this area also met some of the other P-PP objectives, including the opportunity to Provide Leadership on the Safety of Children (#1). At every step, it was made clear that safety was the primary consideration, and evaluations of DR in other states have shown that engaging families in this way actually enhances child safety. The county teams structurally created partnerships (P-PP SOW #3), because they included parents, local community based organizations and other public agencies, along with the CWS representation. Accountability (P-PP SOW #5) was also a major part of the BSC model, in that each small test of change must be evaluated for its impact before it is spread within the organization, During the second year, an emphasis was placed on Communications (P-PP SOW #6) to assist counties in communicating what the changes were about both internally (within their organizations) and externally (in their communities).

In 2004, Cohort 1 Counties' views of these trainings varied widely, many saw the fact that the new administration did not stop them as very positive. Others argued that they would rather have the funds to develop their community partnerships. However, by 2006, all counties reported BSC had been useful particularly in developing their Self Improvement Plans and in working with community partners. As one self-described "original naysayer" commented, "BSC became a valuable tool...it was an incredible help in implementing differential response...we wouldn't have been pushed to do differential response without BSC." Many counties have now fully incorporated the BSC's Plan/Do/Study/Act (PDSA) method into the way they work; others continue to use this approach in a more limited way. Some parts of it are being used by all Cohort 1 counties.

What difference did MCF's funding make?

MCF's BSC funds had a huge overall affect on Redesign implementation. Four examples support this statement, 1) BSC training maintained the Redesign momentum during a long administrative transition, 2) through the P-PP, threats to training were identified and diverted, 3) without BSC, counties would have been unable to implement Differential Response, and 4) as a result of BSC counties had a new tool for implementing change. Each example is discussed below.

1. Maintained Redesign momentum. There was no doubt among Cohort 1 counties that because BSC was essentially the only reform-focused training that occurred during the administrative transition, the momentum of the Redesign was maintained at least at the county level. This allowed counties to continue building on the changes they had already made including building the community partnerships so essential to implementing the Redesign vision.

2. P-PP assured BSC was not abandoned. Without P-PP, BSC training would probably have been abandoned with the change in administration. Through participating in the P-PP, the Consortium had some "insider" information and at one point heard of an effort to undermine the BSC training and to cancel the contract. By making clear at a Cohort 1 leadership meeting that such a move would seriously jeopardize any further CDSS efforts to obtain foundation funding, the Consortium was able to stop the threat before it became a serious proposal.

3. Maximized success of Differential Response implementation. Many Cohort 1 counties argued that they could not have implemented differential response as successfully as they did without BSC. This has had a huge impact because differential response combined with the standardized safety assessment and community involvement has “lead to a more nuanced and sophisticated analysis of whether a child should be removed.” In some counties there have been big changes and decisions about to remove or not to remove were no longer dichotomous but had become comprehensive. That is, child safety no longer automatically equaled child removal.

Because BSC on DR was offered to county Cohorts 1, 2, and 3, its impact was actually far greater than that chronicled by NHF among the Cohort 1 counties. When the BSC on DR started, 43 counties opted to participate. By the end of the process two years later, 41 teams were still involved, and virtually all of the 41 counties had implemented some level of Differential Response. The final report of the BSC on DR describes many of the promising practices and lessons learned during the process.⁵ It is clear that the BSC helped to foster and feed a growing movement to involve current and former clients as advocates in the system, as well as fostering the engagement of families in the processes that impact their lives.

4. Introduced a new change process. As a result of BSC on DR, counties were introduced to a new, and helpful, change process. Many counties have adapted this process to plan, assess, and make other types of organizational and process changes.

2. *The Financing Seminar*

This was the second of the two main training programs partially funded by MCF, and the intent outlined in the Consortium’s MCF proposal was operationally expanded by P-PP. Although work under this topic involved training, it centered on increasing the flexibility and availability of funding. Thus it related primarily to P-PP’s Objective #2 (Obtaining Flexible Funding). It indirectly advanced Objective #3 (Creating & Modeling Partnerships) and, of course, related to Objective #4 (Providing Training & TA). The following discussion describes the expansion of this MCF funded area and state and county representatives’ views of these activities. It ends with an assessment of the impact of MCF’s funding.

The Financing Seminar was originally conceived as including training, on-site consultation and technical assistance to support counties in statewide implementation of the ten new financing strategies identified in the CWS redesign.⁶ It was to be developed jointly by P-PP and offered to all counties. The vision that finally emerged from the P-PP for this work was called the Fiscal Strategies Initiative

⁵ See Attachment B. Breakthrough Series Collaborative, *Implementing Differential Response in California: Promising Practices and Lessons Learned*, casey family programs, series #002, February 2007.

⁶ In addition to these strategies, there was growing pressure to apply for a broader waiver for Title IV-E funds to allow them to be used more flexibly. Action on this strategy had been led by Los Angeles County with support from CDSS staff. The Fiscal Strategies Initiative was not directly involved, however it should be noted that California’s waiver was granted in 2006 and Alameda and Los Angeles counties are implementing it.

(FSI). P-PP also decided to make this Initiative the responsibility of the Inter-Agency Team, later called the State Interagency Team for Children and Youth (SIT). Making SIT responsible for the FSI was an important strategic move because it suggested that the larger objective was anticipated to be met through blended funding from many departments; that is to make clear that multiple funding streams were involved, not just child welfare funding.

FSI had two main goals: 1) to create a mid-level technical advisory group and 2) to develop interagency fiscal academies. The mid-level technical advisory group (which became known as the Barrier Busters Interagency Team or BBIT) consisted of state and county program and fiscal staffs. Their charge was four-fold: a) to identify and address procedural, regulatory and other funding barriers to achieving better outcomes, b) to develop new fiscal strategies, c) to determine the State-level policy and practice changes required to remove barriers to achieving the program outcomes identified by the statewide group, and d) to create an agenda of federal changes that would expedite the work of the state and county interagency teams. A series of interagency fiscal academies was developed and provided at five locations around the state over 15 months.

The FSI proposal was funded by \$110K from foundations (\$100K from the Consortium's MCF grant and \$10K from CFP) which CDSS matched with Title IV-E funds. Other SIT member departments made up the remainder, some of which was also matched. In late 2004, the FSI proposal was finally funded for 18 months at \$431,000. The Barrier Busters Interagency Team was formed and contracted with UC Davis to conduct the training seminars/workshops. By 2006, when the funding ended, BBIT's work was "on hold" with the understanding it would be re-called when necessary.

In discussing its work in 2006, both State and County informants recognized that BBIT had not really "tackled interagency flexible funding," and there had not been any major "breakthroughs." They agreed that it had provided guidance on how to maximize funding within existing criteria—its work was described as "more informational than resulting in increased funding." Nevertheless both groups reported benefits from this work. CDSS informants were pleased to have such a group ready for action, "now we have the capacity in the State...when issues relating to funding come up we have a group that we can take them to and solve them," and County-level informants described the financial seminars/workshops/trainings as "very useful" and "helpful" and that they "provided a good foundation in fiscal claiming."⁷

What difference did MCF's funding make?:

MCF's funding in this area can be connected to outcomes that were as important as those discussed under BSC but that were considerably more subtle and thus not apparent to a majority of chronicling informants. These effects include 1) using MCF funds to leverage other funds, 2) showing the value of public-private

⁷ By early 2006, the BBIT was essentially "dormant." The fact that it did not take up any of the challenging cross department issues may have been because, with the Consortium's closure, there was no longer a strong "third" voice.

partnerships, 3) supporting knowledge transfer, and 4) building new public-private partnerships. These are briefly discussed below.

1. Showed the value of public-private partnerships. Getting the series of interagency fiscal academies developed and implemented around the state was challenging because it was not of high importance to the Consortium's CDSS partners. Nevertheless, the Consortium put it on the agenda of every P-PP meeting and therefore could more easily know when and what specific issues were stalling. As a result, the Consortium could apply pressure in the appropriate areas and of the appropriate kind to keep the actions on track. This pressure varied from gentle threats (how the action would jeopardize philanthropy's perceptions of CDSS) to directly appealing to a strategically placed individual's power and ego. Nevertheless, it took more than one year to move from having the funds to signing a contract. Without the private sector partner, the contract probably would not have been signed and the activity could not have been implemented.

2. Leveraged additional funds. The \$100K of the MCF grant that was set aside for this purpose was leveraged into a \$431K contract by drawing federal matching funds and resources from other state agencies and foundations. MCF's funds also leveraged many hours of in-kind staff time from CDSS, which staffed the BBIT and its monthly meetings.

3. Supported previously unshared knowledge transfer. While BBIT did not come up with new solutions to interagency funding issues, it did promote knowledge transfer among counties by sharing the most innovative and creative strategies different counties had developed for accessing different funding streams and maximizing the ways specific funding streams could be used. Standardizing and sharing this information was extremely important given the high retirement and turnover rate among CDSS and county fiscal staff. This would not have happened without MCF funding.

D. Strategic Communications

Work on this MCF funded topic advanced five of the six P-PP objectives. Most directly, it advanced Objective #6 (Providing Communications Training & TA, etc.), however it also directly advanced Objectives #1 and #5 (Providing leadership on the Safety of Children and Holding Counties Accountable). It indirectly helped achieve Objectives #3 and #4 (Creating and Modeling Partnerships and Providing Training and TA). The following discussion briefly describes P-PP's communications activities and then presents two examples of how these activities played out in reality; it ends with a review of the impact of MCF funding.

In mid 2003, the P-PP jointly funded a strategic communications specialist to develop a communications plan for release of the Redesign final report and the "kick-off" of the Redesign implementation phase. By late 2003, the P-PP had approved a strategic communications plan, which identified activities for which resources were available and prioritized those for which resource development was necessary. Thus, as potential partners showed interest in working with P-PP it was easy to fold them into the communications plan. For example, when the Pew

Charitable Trusts' Fostering Results project⁸ contacted CWDA and the Consortium about collaborating to be the California state partners, the Consortium knew exactly what parts of the statewide communications plan could be accomplished with these resources, and built them into the contract. In forming this new partnership these activities helped P-PP achieve its creating and modeling partnerships objective (#3), and it clearly established the three-way communications partnership among CDSS, CWDA and the Consortium.

In early 2004, P-PP agreed to discontinue using the term "Redesign" and to frame the report as providing the strategies necessary to achieve the outcomes in the PIP as measured through AB636. This resulted in the P-PP's communications staff developing talking points about the Child Welfare Systems Improvements, which became the framework within which the PIP, Redesign and AB636 were integrated. The communications team also put together an Information Kit entitled, *Improving the Lives of California's Children and Families*. It included one-pagers on *Comments on the Redesign*, which showed broad support; a list of practices being taken to scale; a *Pocket Guide* of key messages; a chronology; and definitions).⁹ Staff also jointly developed data sheet templates for counties to help Directors think and talk about the public posting of their AB 636 data, which also began in early 2004. While these activities would by every measure fall under the heading "Communications" and therefore directly related to P-PP's Objective #6, they also took a huge step in advancing Objectives #1 and #2. Objective #1 (Providing Leadership on the Safety of Children) was advanced by helping County Directors frame their data in ways to best support the changes and to neutralize or minimize potentially bad press. Objective #5 (Holding Counties Accountable) was advanced by minimizing County Directors' anxieties about potential problems arising from the public having access to their outcome data.

In 2006, both state and county level informants reported considerable evidence that the MCF funded strategic communications work had paid off. Powerful examples include the statewide response to the National Center for Youth Law's report and the increased child welfare services funds in the 2006 California Budget.

National Center for Youth Law (NCYL). In an effort to increase state oversight of Child Welfare Services, NCYL used the public AB 636 data to rank counties from best to worst on a variety of indicators. Using these data in this way was both unfair and inaccurate. Nevertheless, the San Francisco Chronicle editorialized regularly and negatively about this issue; this was happening at the same time that the 2006 State budget discussions were underway.

⁸ This project involved a public education and outreach campaign to engage stakeholders, policy makers and media in ten states about how to address key challenges facing CWS, particularly its financing and the role of the courts in overseeing child welfare.

⁹ See Information Kit provided as Attachment C. Includes Barbara Needell and Ken Patterson, *The Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act (AB 636): Improving Results for Children and Youth in California*, Foundation Consortium for California's Children and Youth & County Welfare Directors Association, *What Works Brief AB 636: Improving Results*, Summer 2004.

County level informants felt that because of the communications work, CWDA and CDSS “were on the same page when the NCYL report came out,” and because CWDA’s Public Awareness and Education Committee (PAE) had a “thoughtful and coordinated strategy and all the County Directors were saying the same thing, the problem [NCYL Report] went away.” Many county chronicling informants commented on one Director who had not cited NCYL’s questionable report even when it might have helped him in a difficult situation.¹⁰

As a result of the P-PP’s communications work, counties, CWDA, and CDSS were all giving the same message and thus were an important presence in rebutting the NCYL message. Many different groups joined them and helped educate the public and legislators about the child welfare system improvements being implemented. If the public and legislators had believed all that was needed was more authoritarian state oversight (which was one of NCYL’s proposals) they might have withdrawn funds for the improvements and bring this work to a halt. As one informant explained “This is exactly why the Consortium was prescient in getting it [communications] off the ground...if we were just reacting cold—without the infrastructure that the Consortium had built, we couldn’t have done it [effectively countered the NCYL report].”

Increased Child Welfare Services Funds in 2006 Budget. In 2006, about \$220 million in new monies were added to the CWS budget to flexibly support local improvements as identified in counties’ SIPs. Many different groups worked to achieve this and for the first time the advocates had “real data” and the counties, CWDA and CDSS were giving the same message. In addition, this increase was supported by an extremely strong and credible Assembly woman. Seeing her support, the Governor “decided he’d pitch in or she would take all the glory,” according to an informant. Everyone agreed that the communications work done since 2003 had laid the groundwork for the powerful child welfare services voice now present throughout the budget process. As a result of MCF’s funding, CWDA could “hit the ground running” about this issue and the counties acknowledged CWDA’s excellent legislative advocacy work (letters for counties to send to committees) as the financing bills were going through the legislature. As several Cohort 1 Counties said, “communications should get credit for the budget recently passed because now everyone is talking to everybody...three years ago, no-one was talking to anyone.”

For example, as a result of the CDSS/CWDA/Consortium communications work, CWDA’s Public Awareness and Education (PAE) and Children’s Committees now work together much more regularly and collaboratively and counties that have communications resources are helping those that do not. Counties with PIOs are

¹⁰ Several county informants mentioned this incident and cited CWDA’s praise for the CWS Director who had just had a fatality in foster care. This county had rated high in the NCYL report, but the Director did not use this fact in his defense. CWDA praised him for not using a questionable report to his advantage when he was in the spotlight. That is, none of the Directors gave the report credence (several counties conducted other analyses that showed different rankings depending on the data used) and this was because there was a County-level communication plan and they were more “communications savvy.”

represented on CWDA's PAE Committee and this Committee will develop media messages for other CWS Directors as requested. It has also developed a Rapid Response Communications Team. As the Counties acknowledged, this Team is not "printing the big things as the Consortium did," but it will coach CWS Directors from any county that want help in dealing with media crises.

By 2006, it was clear that the P-PP communications work had affected Cohort 1 counties. Many were doing, or looking into doing, their own communications or hiring people to help with it. Others reported looking at new ways to communicate—developing websites, having a quarterly newsletter for staff, community partners and Boards of Supervisors. These efforts have supported CWS systems as they move out of their more insular and isolated roles and into strong community partnerships, which was one of the goals of both the redesign and AB 636.

What difference did MCF's strategic communications funding make?

Of all the MCF funds, those dedicated to strategic communications had the most profound impact on California's child welfare system. These funds 1) helped obtain a large budget supplementation, 2) showed the value of having a private sector advocate, and 3) professionalized counties' use of communications. Details of each are provided below:

1. Brought additional child welfare services funding. Many state and county informants, while acknowledging the effect of advocacy groups and of one State legislator in particular, felt strongly that the P-PP's communications work was directly responsible for CWS getting the additional \$220 million in its 2006 budget because the communications framework and talking points it had developed were used by so many different groups. The cumulative effect of the articles about the unmet needs in child welfare and the County Directors' "single voice" response to a major threat by an advocacy group predisposed the Governor and the legislature to be favorable in supporting budget increases.

2. Taught the value of a trusted private sector advocate. Cohort 1 counties identified a major vacuum when P-PP, specifically the Consortium, and its communications work ended. This was because with the Consortium and this work there had been a private sector partner who could be trusted to provide "a balance to stories...about crisis situations," that is, a credible voice between the blaming of politicians and the defensiveness of child welfare services administrators. Knowing this balance would be there was described as helping "people in the field feel more professional about their jobs...good communications can be an enormous morale builder."

3. Professionalized counties use of communications. There is no question that the P-PP and CWDA/CDSS/Consortium communications work permanently changed California's Child Welfare Services at the county level. The communications kits, Policy Briefs (all of which were published with all three logos—an unprecedented feat in itself!), and technical assistance helped counties better communicate about child welfare to their local leaders and resulted in all counties speaking with a similar voice. In addition to recognizing the importance of a united voice, counties

also used communications materials to educate staffs and communities and learned how useful communications materials are in developing partnerships. They also learned the importance of interacting positively with media, public and all partners; that is, they learned the importance of public relations. As one commented, “The change, in increasing understanding of what we do, brought about by the Consortium’s materials was phenomenal.”

Realizing the positive effects that good communications and public relations can generate, counties also recognized the power they had when they got “in front of the issues and ha[d] a consistent message.” Not only did they recognize this power, many intended to maintain it and use it. As one informant explained, “the Consortium’s work was a big, big help and hopefully one [a lesson] that we’ve learned we must continue.”

E. Community Partnerships for Results

Based on the original proposal, the work MCF funded in this area centered on a combination of convenings and intensive technical support and consultation to support counties in building and strengthening community level partnerships with residents, community-based organizations, First 5 and other local child and family Commissions, private funders and the business community. The intent was that the Consortium would offer this combination of technical support and consultation to selected counties, and that it would be focused on prevention activities—the first goal of the Redesign Plan.

The change in state administrations and other factors led to a diminished priority on the prevention goal and a redirection of the community partners’ work as originally described in the MCF proposal. Thus the Consortium did not take on the work of building strong community-level partnerships, except tangentially through the BSC training and other on-going work with local Family Resource Centers. However, the Consortium was an excellent partner to CDSS and CWDA throughout this period and its work directly advanced P-PP’s Objective #3 (Creating & Modeling Partnerships) and indirectly contributed to P-PP’s Objective #4 (Providing Training & TA).

The discussion below shows the impact of MCF funding through the Public-Private Partnership and its work with the SIT and Champions for Children.¹¹ This section ends with a summary of the impact of MCF funding.

Public-Private Partnership

With the administration change, P-PP’s continuation was threatened as trusted and respected members were replaced by unknown individuals. The new CDSS members were interim appointments that a) were not child welfare professionals, b) had not been involved in developing the Redesign and, hence, c) did not fully understand or embrace it. In fact the Acting Director was very concerned that the Redesign did not sufficiently emphasize children’s safety. Also because they were interim, the two new CDSS P-PP members were unable to make decisions that would

¹¹ MCF allowed the Consortium to make a budget amendment that put a small amount of its funds into staffing the P-PP and SIT.

continue to move Redesign implementation. Throughout 2004, the Consortium worked hard to maintain the earlier momentum and set out to educate the new administration on P-PP's purpose, discuss the mutual benefits of a partnership, ascertain what CDSS wanted from the relationship, and review earlier partnering rules and the Scope Of Work. Throughout, the Consortium called P-PP meetings, offered its help, and generally made it clear they were committed to continuing the partnership.

As a result of the administration change, all P-PP communication and interaction patterns changed dramatically. It is always difficult to adjust to new, unknown, partners as relationships and trust must be built, and the Consortium faced this as the P-PP membership changed. However, in this case, adjustment was further complicated. With the new administration, the P-PP changed from having all female members to having both male and female members. Thus, because of different communication and interaction styles, the Consortium not only had to change how it interacted with its CDSS partners but also how its own P-PP members interacted with each other in P-PP meetings.

In 2004, state-level informants recognized that the Consortium was working hard to keep P-PP and SIT functioning while respecting the needs of the new administration's staff to figure out their position on the Redesign. They also recognized that the opportunity to use the Consortium's connections with legislators and therefore its ability to educate them about child welfare issues was being lost because the new CDSS staff "doesn't have (a) relationship with the Consortium." The Cohort 1 counties, on the other hand, were extremely concerned that the new administration would abandon the Redesign. Several felt that if this was the case, they would like to see FC "politicize the issue and take it to the Governor where the private sector would have more influence."

Many state-level informants believed that the P-PP only survived through this transition because the newly-appointed Agency Secretary had worked in philanthropy and had many ties to that world. She knew if the P-PP was dissolved, philanthropies would be insulted and future opportunities for partnership would be diminished. This explanation has considerable truth, because CDSS's interim staff frequently canceled, forgot and re-scheduled meetings. Observations suggested that CDSS's participation in P-PP only continued under pressure.

When the permanent CDSS Director joined the Department in December 2004, he began to attend P-PP meetings and appeared committed but less involved than the previous administration's Department head. Having been a county Director, he had existing relationships with Consortium staff and was familiar with the Redesign process and plan. Unfortunately his tenure lasted only 10 months.

By 2006, the issues had changed considerably. Many state-level informants regretted the Consortium's closure, although some saw the new Co-Investment Partnership (CIP) as having replaced the P-PP. CIP included foundations, CWDA and CDSS, and it was seen as having evolved from the Communications Committee. Its stated intent was to "leverage the best of public and private efforts and to focus and direct funding to the most efficacious interventions." There is certainly overlap

between P-PP's and CIP's intended purposes. The structural difference was that through CIP, CDSS and CWDA were directly connected to several different foundations rather than to a single organization—the Consortium—that represented many foundations. This suggests several potential problems. None of the foundations represented on CIP had made collaborative public-private partnering the focus of their work, nor were they planning to pool their funds. Thus funding may be driven by many agendas which could prove challenging for CDSS and CWDA.

However, in 2006, the counties reported “lots of local collaboration” with other county departments, family resource centers, schools, community based organizations, faith based organizations, colleges, and foundations. Many counties thought their partnerships were in “the best shape ever” and several commented that “the idea of partnership is very strong,” particularly as it relates to Differential Response for Pathway 1 (the lowest risk) families, older youth preparing to transition out of care, and engaging with those receiving services--youth & parent leaders.

InterAgency Team for Child Welfare Services/State Interagency Team on Children and Youth

This group was intended to create a forum through which “to provide synergy, leadership and guidance to facilitate full county implementation of improved systems that benefit communities and our common population of children and families.” The importance of this group, as signified by the number of Departments represented, had grown considerably since 2004. In that year, the counties did not know what SIT was and state-level informants were unclear about whether it would continue. This was because the administration change had happened before it had “had a big success” and members did not know if the new administration’s Deputy Director would support it. Consequently, SIT members were waiting for a clear statement from CDSS about its intent to continue with the process. Without the Consortium continuing to call and staff meetings, this group would certainly have faded away. However, by the time the Consortium closed in December 2005, SIT members were sufficiently committed to continuing that several Departments together funded SIT’s continued staffing, using the same consultant with whom the Consortium had contracted.

In 2006, state-level informants described SIT as being “at a cross roads” both functionally and structurally. Functionally, the opportunity for interdepartmental communication at the state level was seen as important for the counties, but SIT needed some visible successes which it still had been unable to achieve. Recognizing the importance of having a success, several informants felt SIT’s current work plan was “not doable” because 1) SIT was not funded, the work had to be done by current staff and most departments were losing staff, and 2) SIT’s seven work plan outcomes were seen as being too many to allow success. SIT’s challenge was that achieving this broad range of outcomes was difficult because of staff shortages but inclusive goals and objectives were essential for holding members’ interest.

Structurally SIT was at a cross roads because there was a push to formalize it, the results from which could be positive or negative. It had been an informal group

where members trusted each other and to which participants were solidly committed. Also, they could invite whomever they wanted to join and did not have to go “by process.” Several commented that the relationships created through SIT were extremely valuable. However, if SIT were formalized it could institute a mechanism for allowing Departments to “jointly fund staffing...and...Department heads would support actions thus SIT could make financial and legislative related decisions that it cannot while it remains informal”. As a formal entity, SIT “would have more clout,” but it would also become more politicized and would have to follow open meeting laws and formal representation.

In September 2006, AB 2216 was signed into law. It requires the creation of the California Child Welfare Council, to be co-chaired by a member of the Supreme Court and the Secretary of Health and Human Services. The Council is an advisory body with some required members (Directors of several departments) and some appointed members. It is “responsible for improving the collaboration and processes of the multiple agencies and courts that serve children and youth in the child welfare and foster care systems.” The impact this legislation will have on the SIT is unknown and outside the scope of this report.

Champions for Children:

In September 2003, the P-PP invited all members of the CWS Stakeholders Group, all of the regional groups that had worked with it, the groups that had worked on the federal PIP and other advocates to a convening for the release of the Final report of the Stakeholders’ planning process and the kick-off of the implementation phase. During this meeting, the group agreed to become “Champions for Children” and to take advantage of the momentum that had been created to meet semi-annually to support full implementation of the Redesign.

At the beginning of 2004, the Consortium very much wanted to re-convene Champions for Children but allowed the promised March meeting to be stalled by CDSS’s need to achieve clarity on which of the reforms they would support. CDSS also needed to appoint a federally required State IVB Citizen Review panel and wanted to find a way of integrating the two groups. It was suggested that the Champions “Executive Group” or Steering Committee (20 members) be the Citizen Review Panel. Although originally this was agreed to, it became clear after several more delays, that CDSS leadership had no interest in co-convening a large group of advocates. CDSS then decided that it wanted to appoint a Citizens’ Review Panel with people with child welfare backgrounds that could help CDSS. It was agreed that CDSS, with the Consortium providing five candidate names, would appoint representatives from the Stakeholders Group to assure continuity.

What difference did MCF’s community partner funding make?

These MCF funds helped bring about changes at both the County and State levels. The county-level changes have been major, while the impacts of those at the State level are not yet clear. State-level changes involve the State Interagency Team (SIT) and a fledgling statewide organization of family resources centers. These changes are discussed below under 1) Flourishing County-level partnerships, 2) Struggling State-level partnership and 3) the California Family Resource Association.

1. Flourishing County-level partnerships. As a result of the Redesign development process, the requirements of AB 636, and the work of the P-PP and the Consortium over the last six years, partnering has become integrated into the way child welfare services agencies now think about doing their work. As one informant said “Partnering is a huge legacy from Redesign work.” From the county-level informants’ point of view, the Redesign vision of partnerships is holding at the local level. Both county- and state-level informants recognized that state-level leaders have “partnering” and “partnerships” as part of their language but they had little confidence in CDSS’s capacity to fully act upon them.

2. Struggling State-level partnership. While partnerships are flourishing within and among Cohort 1 counties (and probably other counties as well), the State Interagency Team is struggling to remain viable and relevant. Nevertheless, it is highly valued by its members who have increased in number and who continue to attend meetings. While SIT has not yet had any “public” successes; it has had several “behind the scenes” successes. Several state informants talked about how they now had relationships so that they could pick up the telephone and directly discover the facts in difficult situations. There was also an example from SIT members who were working on a highly sensitive issue; one of them made an error in an email which completely changed the meaning of what was being said. Because of their relationship and increased communication, the other knew this was an error and potentially serious problems that could have arisen from this miscommunication were avoided.

3. California Family Resource Association. The change in administrations in late 2003 resulted in a re-orientation of planned Redesign activities and a narrowing of the focus of implementation away from prevention. As a consequence, a large-scale public-private capacity-building process such as the “Community Partnerships for Results” originally envisioned in the MCF grant became a low priority for the public sector partners. Throughout 2004 and early 2005, the Consortium sought to adjust by convening numerous discussions with interested stakeholders about the most appropriate type of support for the burgeoning community partnerships across the state. Public sector interest was in building referral networks for differential response, which comes after a first child protective services referral is made, making it secondary prevention or early intervention. In response, the Consortium used a small portion of MCF’s grant to explore data/case tracking systems for non-profit service providers that could assist them to be better partners with public systems.

During 2005, the Consortium also worked to create opportunities to tie together this work and the “Prevention through Community Partnerships” goal of the Redesign with its ongoing work (funded through other sources) to strengthen the family support field in the state. When the Consortium closed in December 2005, after discussions with MCF staff, the \$300K for community partnerships remaining in its MCF grant was rolled over to help establish the California Family Resource Association. This organization will support and promote relationships between family resource centers and child welfare services and will advocate on behalf of the family resource centers and other family strengthening organizations.

IV. LESSONS LEARNED

As the earlier discussions have shown, Marguerite Casey Foundation funding had a profound effect on California's child welfare system in each of the areas that were funded. In addition, this project also offered several lessons to funders and others interested in changing large systems through public-private partnerships. These "Lessons Learned" are presented below:

1. Long-term and major changes in operations and policy are more likely to occur if they are implemented according to a set of values which have emerged from inclusive and comprehensive discussions.

The Redesign process began with an extensive values-based discussion that articulated the principles on which the CWS Stakeholders Group (that included a broad range of public and private sector representatives) wanted California's child welfare services to be based. This discussion expanded to the regional and county levels, involving several thousands in the process. In 2003 and 2004 there was some criticism of the long planning process and talk that more counties should have been involved in the process earlier. However, by 2006 many of these critics were acknowledging that the initial values-based discussion had, in fact, established shared and deeply held convictions on the "rightness" of the Redesign plan so that its primary principles remained despite unanticipated events and changes.

Public and private funders (including legislatures) wanting to bring about major systems change should take note of this process that is too frequently ignored, under funded or forced to be completed too quickly. Change is most successfully and permanently achieved through relationships and partnering to achieve shared goals. For example, the redesign vision of partnerships is unquestionably holding at the local level, as one County representative commented, "everyone is partnering with everyone." By funding a project based on an inclusive and comprehensive values-based process, MCF maximized the likelihood of the project's success.

2. To help bring about major, long-term change, both the funder and those funded must be flexible in how funds are spent and what is undertaken.

MCF is to be commended for the degree of flexibility it allowed in the Consortium's grant. Funders who require up-front accounting of how every dollar will be spent on complex projects are unlikely to be as satisfied with the outcome as those who allow flexibility. Change implementation requires a strategic and opportunistic approach, particularly in complex and unstable environments. Thus those implementing or promoting the change must be able to take advantage of situations without fear that their funders will either not support them or will require so much paper work that any deviation from the initially proposed activities becomes daunting.

In addition to extreme flexibility, those funding public-private partnerships must also provide sufficient funds.¹² In most situations, philanthropic funds can never

¹² MCF provided \$2 million to support the Consortium in its work with the P-PP. The Consortium leveraged this to a total project budget of \$6.7 million over the three years.

equal government funds. Nevertheless, the private sector funds must be sufficient to demand respect from the government partner and thus give the private partner some power. The fact that the Consortium represented 23 foundations provided its major source of power—power that a single funder, or even a group of funders (each member with its own agenda), is unlikely to achieve.

3. In a State supervised/County administered child welfare system, a flexibly and sufficiently funded “third voice” can add enormous value.

As the representative of the philanthropic community, the Consortium added value to implementing the child welfare improvements in many different ways: contributing and leveraging funds, being a strong and respected child welfare advocate, assuring essential trainings were provided, and on more than one occasion preventing the new administration from thoroughly frustrating the county administrators and advocates.¹³ Even so, full project implementation was delayed by political forces well beyond the control of any of the partners.

4. A private sector partner in a public-private partnership can keep efforts going even as the public sector must deal with unanticipated/political events.

Given the unstable environment resulting from the recall and change in administration, it is most likely that without the Consortium’s “third voice,” redesign activities at the state-level would have been severely minimized or disappeared and all responsibility for continuing them would have devolved to the Counties. If this had happened, some of the Cohort 1 counties could have continued to implement some of the changes but most would not. Thus, the overall improvements currently observed in California’s child welfare system would not have occurred.

5. To add value, the “third voice/partner” must have specific attributes.

Through its funding, MCF maximized the chances of project success because the Consortium had long-term and extensive experience in partnering with the public sector and brought to this project a complex of partnering-related operating principles that functioned at both the individual and organizational levels. That is, the Consortium’s culture supported and nurtured partnering and relationship building.¹⁴

The Consortium’s commitment to and experience and patience with relationship building and partnering were seen in many different attitudes and skills and were particularly important during the early months of the transition. For example:

- a. negotiating new roles and responsibilities with its new P-PP partners and not assuming or imposing those it had had with the previous administration;
- b. honoring its “no surprise” rule by sharing apparently unrelated aspects of its other work

¹³ For example, by making sure CDSS understood potential consequences of cancelling the BSC trainings, and by working to make sure the work of the CWS Stakeholders Group was acknowledged by assuring this group was appropriately represented on the federally required Citizens Review Panel.

¹⁴ See further discussion of these issues in Attachments D & E, Judy K. Chynoweth, *Foundation Collaboration in Action* and *Foundation-Government Partnerships*, Foundation Consortium for California’s Children and Youth, Winter 2006.

- c. being sensitive to both the symbolism and meaning of words by constantly searching for words that would promote Redesign implementation without reference to the previous administration.¹⁵ Thus, over a few weeks the change in approach was reflected in the language moving from “Redesign” to “redesign,” to “Reforms” to “reforms” to “changes,” to “improvements,” to, finally, “Improvements.”
- d. respecting the new partners’ needs to make up their own minds by offering to fund a consultant of their choice to assess the improvement recommendations, and
- e. recognizing and accepting responsibility for how the new pieces of the system related to each other. Once the Consortium’s communications staff recognized that County Directors were talking about Redesign as if it were separate from AB636 and PIP, work immediately began on defining each and clarifying the relationships between them.

Without its previous public-private partnering experiences, the Consortium might have responded differently. For example, it might have waited for new administration staff to be appointed, thereby losing the momentum surrounding child welfare systems improvements in early 2004. Or, it might have quickly politicized the issue by pushing for continued change through the legislature. In either case, it would not have been acting as a responsible partner and the current situation—increased child welfare services funding, differential response being implemented in almost all counties, strong local partnerships being built—would be very different.

6. Communications were essential to the success of this large-scale reform effort

It became clear, that without the collaborative strategic communications plan MCF’s money was used to create and develop from its beginning; this project would not have been as successful because communications activities are not a “quick fix.” The P-PP plan identified all the things it wanted to do and which could be accomplished with existing resources. With such a plan, when the P-PP was asked to join a nationally funded project, it knew exactly which complementary activities could be supported with the new funds. Without such a plan, P-PP communications work could have become disjointed and probably not as successful.

7. Having a high-level, seasoned strategic communications professional helped assure success.

The Consortium hired a communications professional with national and international experience in children’s issues, as well as state and national political experience. She understood what was needed and how to build on what was already going on. In working with the various stakeholders, she was also willing to push people beyond their comfort zones to ensure clarity and arrive at consensus.

¹⁵ This may well have been the result of the Consortium’s Executive Director and the P-PP Project Manager having worked for Governors and having been through such transitions before. It reinforces the importance of funding not only experienced organizations but also experienced organizations with experienced staff.

In putting together the various communications materials, many “one-pagers” were developed, e.g., Differential Response, Outcomes, Safety Assessment, and they had to be signed by all three entities (CDSS, the Consortium, CWDA). Thus, the representatives from the various entities had to agree on the language. Getting them to this point required pushing them to clarify all their assumptions and expectations, where they agreed and disagreed. Such activity was, de facto, using the communications process to shape and move policy.

Another advantage of having an experienced communications professional was that she understood how to build upon what had already existed. For example, from the beginning of AB 636 implementation, CDSS had contracted with UC Berkeley’s Child Welfare Research Center for data cleaning and report preparation. The Professor in charge listened when she was told that the early data were not “telling the truth” and carefully discovered how her own and social workers’ definitions of specific elements were different. She is a strong child welfare advocate and wanted the data to be robust and used to improve the outcomes of children and families. This constructive, as opposed to punitive, approach meshed with the Consortium’s operating principles and was continued when the communications professional developed ways for County Directors to publicly present their data. As a result of this history and complementary approaches, everyone has a vested interest in making sure the data are accurate, valid and reliable and Counties are using them to improve their systems.

8. *The BSC method works to make radical changes in huge, diverse systems*

The BSC training was offered to all the counties in Cohorts 1, 2 and 3 and 43 participated including all Cohort 1 counties. In October 2006, Cohort 1 counties reported, on behalf of themselves and other counties that they could not have implemented Differential Response without it. Initially, social workers anticipated that these trainings to help implement evidence-based practices would be entirely didactic. Instead through the training they received a practice framework, support from an experienced national faculty, and a team process for quickly and easily making small changes towards achieving it. Because they could test and revise changes on a small scale, social workers became excited about the shifts in practices they could affect even in large systems. Thus by late 2006, all Cohort 1 and many other counties had begun implementing Differential Response. Most of the Cohort 1 counties reported that they were continuing to use the BSC approach with Differential Response and had started using it in other areas they wanted to change.

9. *Unanticipated benefits from chronicling*

By funding the chronicling of the change process, MCF underscored its sense of the national importance of what was being undertaken in California. As is generally true, the very acts of observing, interviewing and reporting had an impact on the process itself. This was most clearly illustrated by two examples in which the impact was quite beneficial.¹⁶ First, at the very beginning of the process the

¹⁶ It should be noted that a potentially adverse consequence of chronicling such a complex and large-scale change process is that many nuances, important to those interviewed, may be lost.

chronicler's need for clarity promoted a theory of change process. The resulting work plan formalized implementation planning immediately before the unanticipated political recall. This process, which had included representatives from several counties, helped to keep work on track during the ensuing transition.

The second example is the willingness of the P-PP to use the reports compiled by the chronicler after each set of interviews as quality improvement opportunities. The BSC on DR underwent major adjustments half-way through, in part as a response to findings from the interviews. Also, after the results of the first round of NHF interviews were shared with the P-PP, the Consortium added a new item to its work plan to obtain flexible funding and fiscal support for County CWS improvements. Using feedback from the county interviews, the Consortium built upon its publication *Opportunities for Philanthropy*¹⁷ and partnered with local funders to co-host public-private dialogues on the implications and opportunities for implementing CWS Improvements in several counties where local funders were interested. These activities resulted in better and more informed relationships among public and private sector funders in several counties, as well as some increased funding of community based organizations. For example, the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health co-hosted several dialogues in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties and then focused a local funding initiative on building community capacity for receiving Differential Response referrals; the Annenberg Foundation funded permanency efforts in Los Angeles County that it learned about by attending a dialogue co-sponsored by Southern California Grantmakers.

10. Unanticipated consequences from MCF funds

MCF awarded a \$2 million grant to the Consortium in August, 2003. Given this investment, MCF was invited to join the other 20 foundations as a member of the Consortium's governing board. MCF declined membership, believing that, as a national funder, this could set a precedent that it would find difficult to sustain. The consequences for the Consortium of accepting such a large, targeted grant from a non-member foundation were not immediately understood. However, it contributed to a shift in the internal structure of what had begun as a successful pooled fund, governed by the foundations that invested in it because they believed in its mission. Over time, an increasingly large percent of the Consortium's funding had become targeted grants, rather than pooled funds, with the MCF grant the largest such example. In its final publication, *Foundation Collaboration in Action*, this, along with several other factors, are cited as contributing to the closing of the Consortium.

V. SUMMARY

There is no question that through its grant to the Foundation Consortium for California's Children & Youth, Marguerite Casey Foundation constructively affected the implementation of child welfare services improvements in this State. The entire Redesign vision has not been, and may never be, met but many important parts of it remain and are being put into action. Child welfare social workers are developing

¹⁷ See Attachment F, Foundation Consortium for California's Children & Youth, *Child Welfare Services Redesign Implementation: Opportunities for Philanthropy*, October 2003.

more nuanced and sophisticated approaches to assessing how to meet families' needs, and child welfare administrators are using data to improve services and educate local leaders. California's children and families can only benefit from such improvements.