

Significant Issues Report —July 2004

Children's Network News

- The Children's Network received a \$5,000 grant from Kaiser Permanente which will provide a local match for up to \$8,000 in AmeriCorps funding. This funding will support the AmeriCorps Coordinator, who coordinates trainings for Family Resource Center AmeriCorps members and national service days (such as the Blue Ribbon campaign).
- The Integrated Family Support Initiative (IFSI), now in its 4th year, is a comprehensive program offering family support services to isolated families with children 0 - 5 who are at risk of abuse and neglect in Solano County. The Children's Network, the lead agency for the ISFI project, recently appointed Dr. Tamsen Stevenson as Project Director. Stevenson will oversee coordination of prevention, intervention and treatment services offered through home visits, with multidisciplinary teams in center-based services through Solano's Family Resource Centers, and assessment and treatment services at Child Haven. According to Stevenson, "We will be working closely with Child Protective Services (CPS) to assure that IFSI's programs, documentation, and evaluation efforts are consistent with CPS requirements for differential response under CWS redesign." *For more information on the IFSI program, contact Tam Stevenson at analyst@childnet.org*
- The Children's Network provides staff support to Solano's Family Resource Center Network. In Spring 2004, Solano's eight Family Resource Centers (FRCs) completed a survey about the impact of Children's Network's support of the FRC's work with families and local communities. The large majority of FRC staff reported that the Children's Network has made a positive impact in the following ways:
 - The Network has helped FRCs collaborate with others to provide services;
 - The Network has served as an effective vehicle to advocate for the needs of children and families;
 - The Network has increased staff's ability to assess and refer families appropriately;
 - The Network has increased the sustainability of FRC programs.
- When asked how the Children's Network has been *most* helpful to FRC staff, the most common response was in the areas of data collection, evaluation and sustainability. 60% of those surveyed indicated that the *ChildNet Results Manager* database developed by the Children's Network has been a very useful tool in documenting results of services provided. Below are FRC commentaries about how their work with families has been supported by the Network:
 - *Strengths-Based Programs:* "Our AmeriCorps member was originally our client and is now self-sufficient and helping others." Children's Network has secured AmeriCorps funding for the FRCs since 2000.
 - *Family Advocacy/Service Collaboration:* An example of the success we have had is with "the coverage of medical care to an immigrant family – a child with hearing problems

was put on California Kids and medical costs were covered because of FRC advocacy for the family and work with doctors, schools and a community organization.”

- **Outcomes Evaluation:** “The Family Development Matrix (evaluation tool) has enabled us to see that we are improving lives regularly. It boosts the morale of staff and is helpful in asking the full range of questions when meeting with families and individuals.” The Children’s Network supports FRCs in their use of the Family Development Matrix. *For further information, contact Jenny Ocón at cnfrc@childnet.org*

Benicia Family Resource Center

The Benicia Police Department is the new contractor operating the Benicia Family Resource Center, which was previously operated by Youth and Family Services. The new location for the Family Resource Center is 200 East “L” Street in Benicia. Contact Colleen Smith or Lt. Steve Mortensen for information on the FRC at (707) 746-4352.

Solano Parenting Partnership in the Courts

Collaboration and networking fostered by the Parenting Partnership in partnership with the Solano County Courts has resulted in the beginnings of a smoother referral system for families court-ordered to attend parenting classes. Through discussions at joint meetings, it became clear that families who were court-ordered to attend parenting classes had a difficult time finding programs appropriate to their needs. Many providers were unsure which classes would meet the court’s mandate and what documentation the courts required from providers. Thus, providers had difficulty assisting court-ordered families. Providers now have a greater understanding of the courts’ orders, and the types of documentation needed from providers. Meetings with providers and court representatives also led to a new system of referrals for parents in the court system. Now, when a family is ordered to attend a parenting class, the court gives the family a flyer (see attached) that includes directions for accessing the parenting database, contact information for Family Resource Centers, and the Children’s Network’s on-line community directory. *For further information, contact Nicole Bandy at nicole@childnet.org*

Solano CARES (Compensation and Retention Encourage Stability) – Program Year 3

We have completed the third program year of Solano CARES, a project of the Child Care Planning Council, administered by the Network, and made possible by grants from First 5 Solano Children and Families Commission, First 5 California, and the California Department of Education. Over the course of the past three years, we have increased the quality of child care and development services in Solano County by increasing the educational levels, and improving the retention rates, of more than 20 percent of the workforce. Children’s Network staff will present the year 3 and overall program findings at an upcoming First 5 Solano Children and Families Commission meeting. Some of these findings include:

Stipend Recipients

- To date, more than 1,000 training and retention incentive stipends (totaling over \$1,322,000) have been issued to 566 providers, representing over 20 percent of the total licensed workforce.
- These providers serve an estimated 10,000 children zero to five in Solano County.

Training and Education

- In the past year alone, 251 providers participating in the program completed either 3 additional Early Childhood Education (ECE) units or 21 hours of professional growth training, and attended a Solano CARES Forum.
- CARES Forum attendance has increased by 27 percent since the first program year, from 444 to 564 participants in the past year.
- Solano Community College has noticed a 43 percent increase in the number of ECE majors enrolled for credit from 554 students in 2000-2001 (preCARES) to 793 in the past year.
- The number of SCC students who successfully complete coursework in ECE or Human Development has increased by 14 percent, from 1,638 students in 2000-2001 to 1,866 students in the past year.

Turnover

- CARES continues to help ensure the stability of the child care workforce. The turnover rates of teachers, teacher/directors, and directors have slightly declined over the past few years, from 25 percent to 24 percent, 3 percent to no turnover, and 10 percent to 4 percent respectively. The turnover rates of teacher assistants and family child care providers remain consistent.
- The turnover rates of providers participating in CARES is 4% as compared to the 2001 total workforce turnover rates of family child care providers at 27 percent and teachers working in centers at 25 percent. *For further information, contact Kim Johnson at ccc@childnet.org*

Solano Children's Alliance

- The Board of Supervisors adopted the Solano Children's Alliance recommendations to support two measures:
 - SB 1343, a measure co-sponsored by Assemblymember Wolk that proposes the development of a comprehensive Master Plan for infant and toddler care. Plans currently exist for K-12 and higher education; an infant and toddler Master Plan will help guide policy makers address the needs of all ages of children.
 - AB 2795, a measure that expands the time counties can complete child welfare services written case plans from 30 days to the federal maximum of 60 days. It also authorizes multiple six-month extensions to family maintenance services, which will help Solano County implement its CWS redesign.
- The BOS also adopted the Alliance's recommendations regarding the governor's proposed 2004-2005 State Budget. These recommendations include:
 - Medi-Cal for Children & Healthy Families Program: Maximize federal matching funds, minimize bureaucracy, and leverage federal revenue.
 - CalWORKs: Preserve family income, which promotes self-sufficiency and better outcomes for children. Allow county flexibility in developing work plans for clients.
 - Food Assistance Programs: Rescind proposal to eliminate Transitional Food Stamp Benefits program.