A Lasting Impact: Accessible & High-Quality Services for Monterey County's Children and Families

A Status Report on First 5 Monterey County's Funded Agencies

FY 2013-14 Systems-Level Evaluation Report

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Prepared for

FIRST 5
MONTEREY COUNTY

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community research

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Key Findings

The 2013-14 Systems-Level Evaluation Report surveyed 49 respondents comprising management, program coordinators, and front-line staff at 25 F5MC-funded agencies. Notable findings include the following:

F5MC supports and maintains services that are accessible and welcoming to families with young children.

- *Staff at funded agencies are culturally and linguistically responsive to the populations they serve* - Eighty-five percent of agencies have Hispanic /Latino line staff and 20 percent have Indigenous line staff. A substantial share of funded partners also have Hispanic/Latino or Indigenous Executive Directors (40 percent and 15 percent, respectively) and Program Coordinators (55 percent and 5 percent, respectively).

- *Several barriers to services being "community-based" emerged* - Compared to past years, a larger portion of funded partners reported that *lack of transportation services* and *services are not provided in the location where the target population lives* were barriers to clients' ability to receive services. Moreover, 48 percent of funded partners reported that at least half of their clients walked to their program – a number that has been steadily increasing for the past three years – while the percent of agencies that offer various types transportation assistance has been steadily decreasing.

- *A growing share of funded partners are engaging in many activities to encourage father and working parent participation-* The most commonly-employed activities

to encourage father participation were holding events in the evening (88 percent) and ensuring staff competency in this area (80 percent). Still, just 32 percent of agencies invited guests on fatherhood-related topics or ensured that some groups were led by males. Additionally, a greater portion of funded agencies are engaging in activities to encourage working parent participation than last year, including providing childcare during services and/or developing targeted outreach materials (64 percent each).

- *A higher percentage of agencies engaged in family-centered activities than last year, yet more can be done to improve service retention* - More than half of funded agencies worked to ensure that parents identified their needs and to involve working parents and all family members in service provision. In terms of service retention, most reported that they track families who stop participating (64 percent) and reach out to them after they disengage (78 percent) and/or after scheduled breaks (85 percent) *always* or *most of the time.* However, a smaller proportion reported holding new client orientations or connecting new participants to other participants.

- *Funded partners identified barriers to providing services during nontraditional times* – Services are less likely to be offered during winter holiday and summer months, and on weekday evenings and weekends. Insufficient staff, followed by financial constraints and perceived low demand, were reported as the greatest barriers to providing services outside of traditional hours (68, 44, and 40 percent, respectively).

Leveraging relationships and modernizing referral processes are making systems navigation easier for families

- *Electronic data systems are being used by a growing share of funded partners to make and track referrals* - This year, for the first time, the percentage of agencies that reported using the Persimmony data system surpassed the percentage of agencies using the paper referral form (64 percent versus 44 percent). Seventy-one percent of agencies reported using Persimmony for referral tracking and 21 percent reported using Excel spreadsheets, both up slightly from 2012-13.

- *While agencies are connected through a strong network, there are opportunities to deepen those connections* - Out of all possible interactions between agencies, partners reported that 71 percent of them were occurring. The majority of these interactions reportedly happen at the networking level (68 percent), meaning that agencies are aware of one another but have little communication and no defined roles or information-sharing. A smaller portion of relationships were reported at the coordination (21 percent) or collaboration (11 percent) levels.

Overall, funded partners are highly satisfied with the F5MC staff and Commission

- *While agencies reported high levels of satisfaction with F5MC staff, their satisfaction decreased slightly from the prior year in some areas* - Eighty to 100 percent of respondents stated that they *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with positive statements about their interactions with

F5MC staff; however, they shifted from *strongly agree* to *agree* responses in some areas. Agencies also had positive feedback about F5MC's technical assistance activities, highlighting their helpful responses, timely support, and high-quality consultants.

- *Funded partners reported higher levels of satisfaction with the F5MC Commission* – They identified areas of improvement in their interactions with the Commission and perceive the Commission to be more active. For example, 84 percent of funded partners *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the F5MC Commission "seeks the input of parents/caregivers when making decisions," up from 45 percent last year.

Funded agencies are increasingly comfortable promoting early childhood development

- *Agencies reported a greater capacity to advocate for policy change* - Funded partners are more actively advocating for policy change at the local and state level than last year. Almost half reported having *strong* or *very strong* capacity to serve as a voice for early childhood policies and concerns at the local level (48 percent) and to develop talking points and messages for diverse target audiences (44 percent), while they generally reported less capacity to organize and mobilize. Compared to last year, funded agencies reported decreases in two barriers to advocacy: a lack of awareness and understanding about the local policy landscape (from 41 to 32 percent) and legal restrictions (30 to 16 percent).

Welcome

Strengthening systems by embodying essential characteristics

First 5 Monterey County (F5MC) is committed to serving as the catalyst for sustainable change in the systems, policies, and practices that enrich the development of children in their first five years of life. In 2005, F5MC worked in tandem with diverse community stakeholders, including public and private sector leaders, community partners, early childhood practitioners and educators, and parents and caregivers to develop the Early Learning Opportunities (ELO) strategic plan. The ELO strategic plan emphasizes efforts to build the skills of parents, child care providers, educators and health professionals known to positively impact the quality of a child's development and early learning experiences. The ELO strategic plan calls on F5MC and its funded agencies to strengthen systems that help children and families thrive by embodying the following essential characteristics:

- Culturally and linguistically appropriate
- Family-centered/centric
- Community-based
- Operate flexible hours and schedules
- Coordinated among agencies

Since implementation of the ELO strategic plan, F5MC has proactively monitored the system of services to ensure that children and families have access to quality services that meet their needs, and gathers family and provider feedback to make real-time adjustments to the network of funded services. As part of these efforts, the F5MC Systems-Level Evaluation provides insights into the system of services available to Monterey County's youngest children and their families. This annual survey provides an opportunity to stop, reflect and gain a better understanding of approaches that are working well – and others that may require more attention. The following questions helped to guide this year's evaluation:

- How well do F5MC-funded services embody the essential program characteristics defined in the ELO Strategic Plan?
- To what extent are F5MC-funded services and programs collaborating?
- What has F5MC done to assist in building the capacity of community groups and area programs?
- To what extent are programs improving their capacity to serve young children and families?
- How has F5MC been a community convener/catalyst, policy advocate and educator?

A Note to Our Readers: *The 2013-14 Funded Partner Survey included many of the same questions asked in previous surveys conducted over the past five years, since the initial 2007-08 survey. However, there were instances where questions were added or modified after the initial year.*

Program Characteristics

Striving to support and maintain services that are accessible and welcoming to families with young children

In order for early childhood development programs and services to be beneficial to young children and families, they must be accessible on multiple levels. Since 2007-2008, findings have consistently shown that *F5MC* and its funded agencies continue to make strides toward improving access of services and programs to the diverse communities of Monterey County.

F5MC-funded services continue to be culturally and linguistically responsive to target populations.

Over the years, F5MC has worked to ensure that agency staff are reflective of the communities they serve. The provision of culturally and linguistically appropriate services requires intentional and ongoing work on the part of F5MC and its funded partners. Out of all agency staff, line staff in particular have the most intensive and ongoing contact with service participants. In 2013-14, 81 percent of parents served were Hispanic/Latino and 12 percent were Indigenous/Native American. As illustrated in Exhibit 1, 85 percent of agencies have Hispanic /Latino line staff and 20 percent have Indigenous line staff, both of which align with the client population. Additionally, a substantial share of funded partners have Hispanic/Latino or Indigenous Executive Directors (40 percent and 15 percent, respectively) and Program Coordinators (55 percent and 5 percent, respectively).

E1. Race/Ethnicity of Program Staff, FY 08-09 and 13-14

Race/Ethnicity	Percent of Agencies					
	Executive Director		Program Coordinator		Line Staff	
	2008-09	2013-14	2008-09	2013-14	2008-09	2013-14
White	50	70	50	36	40	35
Hispanic/Latino	40	39	55	60	85	96
Indigenous	15	4	5	4	20	4
Asian/ Pacific Islander	-	4	5	16	25	21
African American	-	-	-	4	5	9

Funded agencies have a strong track record of providing linguistically as well as culturally appropriate services for client populations. In 2013-14, 72 percent of F5MC parents spoke Spanish as their primary language and 11 percent spoke Triqui or Mixteco as their primary language. As in past years, all funded partners have line staff that speak Spanish and some (8 percent in 2013-14) also have line staff that speak Mixteco and/or Triqui (Exhibit 2). Additionally, close to three-fourths of agencies have program coordinators that speak Spanish and just under half (42 percent) have Executive Directors that speak Spanish.

E2. Language Spoken by Program Staff, FY 08-09 and 13-14

Languages Spoken	Percent of Agencies					
	Executive Director		Program Coordinator		Line Staff	
	2009-10	2013-14	2009-10	2013-14	2009-10	2013-14
English	100	100	100	96	96	96
Spanish	42	48	65	72	100	100
Mixteco/Triqui	4	4	4	4	16	8
Other	-	4	-	12	15	9

These data about the race/ethnicity of, and languages spoken by, program staff indicate that F5MC and its funded partners are consistently working to ensure that services continue to be culturally and linguistically appropriate for their target populations.

The location of funded services and access to transportation are emerging as potential barriers for F5MC participants.

Compared to the past several years, in 2013-14 a larger portion of funded partners reported both that *lack of transportation services* and *services are not provided in the location or neighborhood where the target population lives* were barriers to clients being able to receive services (Exhibit 3). It is unclear whether this is due to changes in the location that service are provided, changes in where the target population lives, or a combination of the two. However, the year-over-year increase was slightly less among agencies that were funded in both 2012-13 and 2013-14; for that subset, *lack of transportation services* remained constant at 35 percent in both 2012-13 and 2013-14, while *location of services* was reported as a barrier by 5 percent in 2012-13 and 18 percent in 2013-14.

E3. Selected Barriers to Access *(Percent of Agencies)*, **FY 07-08 through 13-14**
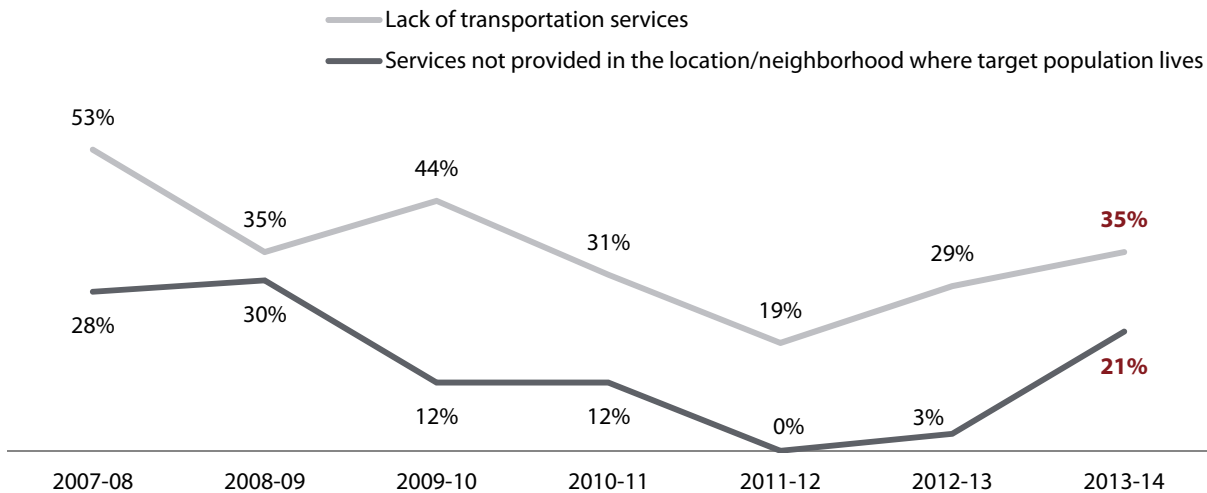
In 2013-14, 48 percent of funded partners reported that at least half of their clients walked to their program. This number has been steadily increasing for the past three years (Exhibit 4). Moreover, the percent of agencies reporting that they offer various types transportation assistance to their clients has been steadily decreasing during the same time period.

E4. Transportation Assistance Offered by Program *(Percent of Agencies)***, FY 11-12 to 13-14**
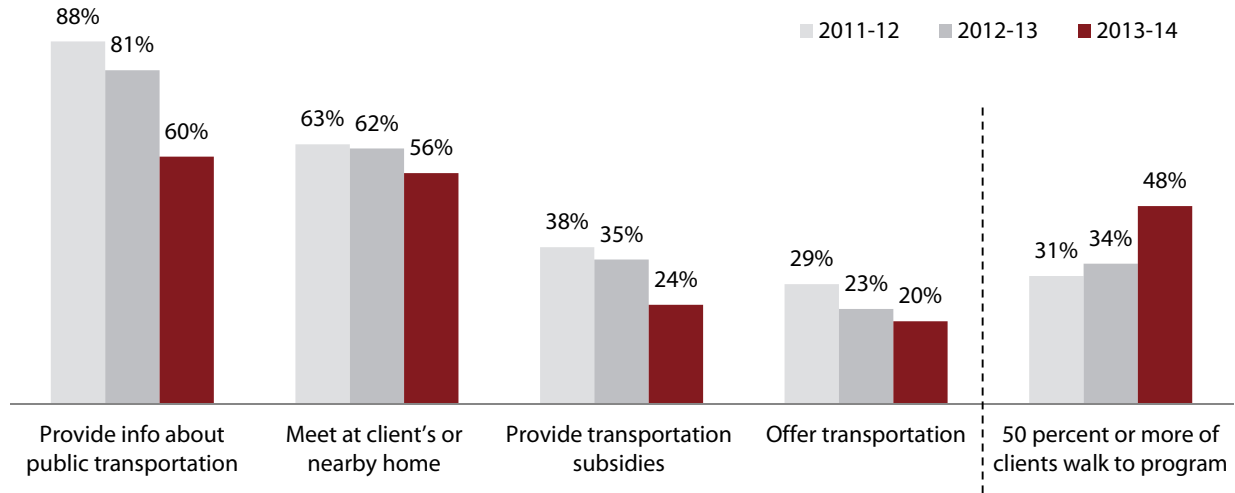

These findings demonstrate the need for further exploration about the extent to which funded services are being provided in the places where clients live, work, and gather, and the burden placed on target populations to get themselves to needed services.

While funded partners are making progress in many activities that encourage father and working parent participation, there are opportunities for further improvement.

Parent interview and client-level data indicate that there are opportunities for funded partners to increase the extent to which they engage the fathers of F5MC families. In 2011-12, 87 percent of F5MC children were in two-parent households yet, in 2012-13, 73 percent of parents served were female. Compared to last year, findings about the percent of agencies that undertake activities to encourage father participation were mixed (Exhibit 5). As in 2012-13, the most commonly-employed activities were holding events in the evening (88 percent of agencies) and ensuring staff competency in this area (80 percent). However, just under one-third of funded agencies (32 percent) invited guests on fatherhood-related topics or ensured that some groups were led by males.

E5. Activities to Encourage Father and Working Parent Participation *(Percent of Agencies)*, **FY 12-13 to 13-14**
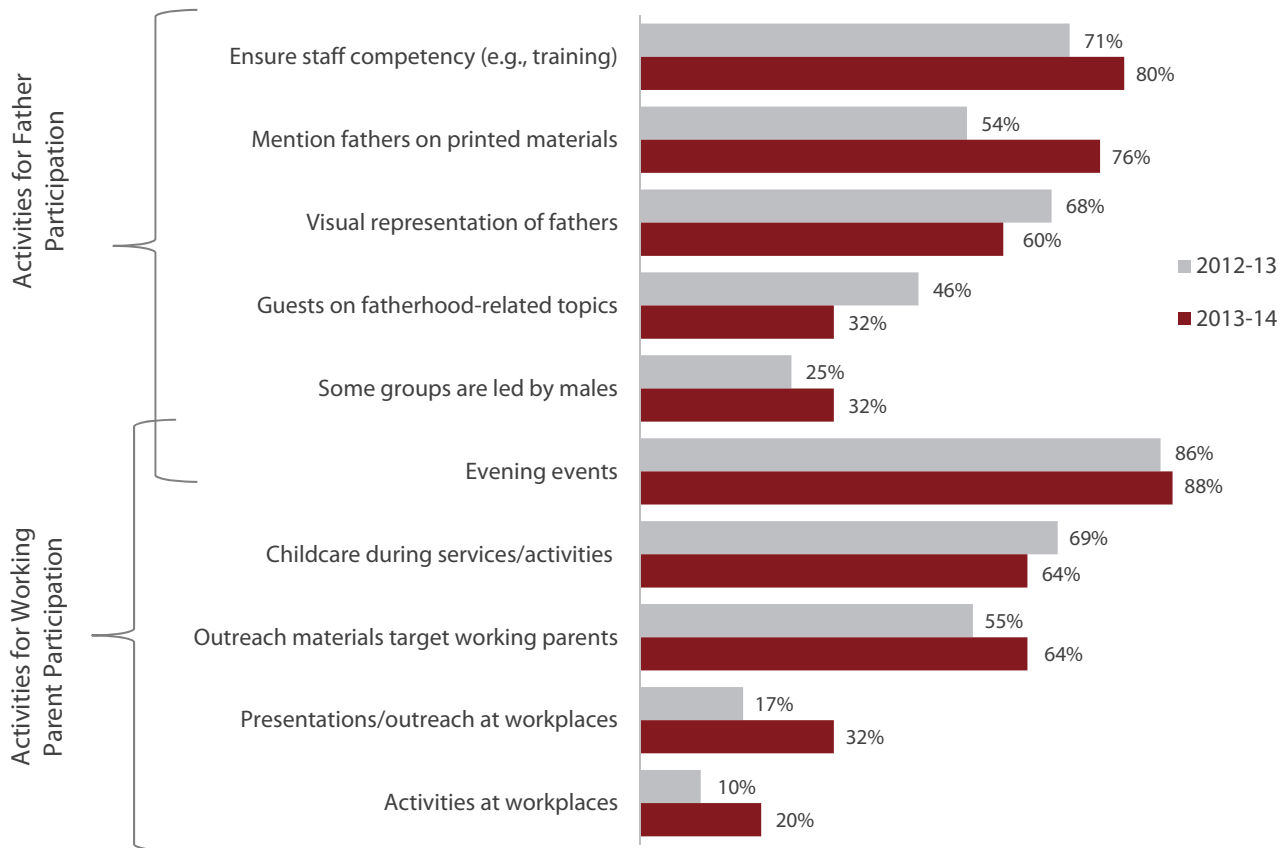
Compared to 2012-13, a greater percentage of funded partners ensured staff competence in father participation (80 percent this year compared to 71 percent last year) and specifically mentioned fathers on printed materials (76 percent compared to 54 percent). On the other hand, a smaller portion used visual representations of
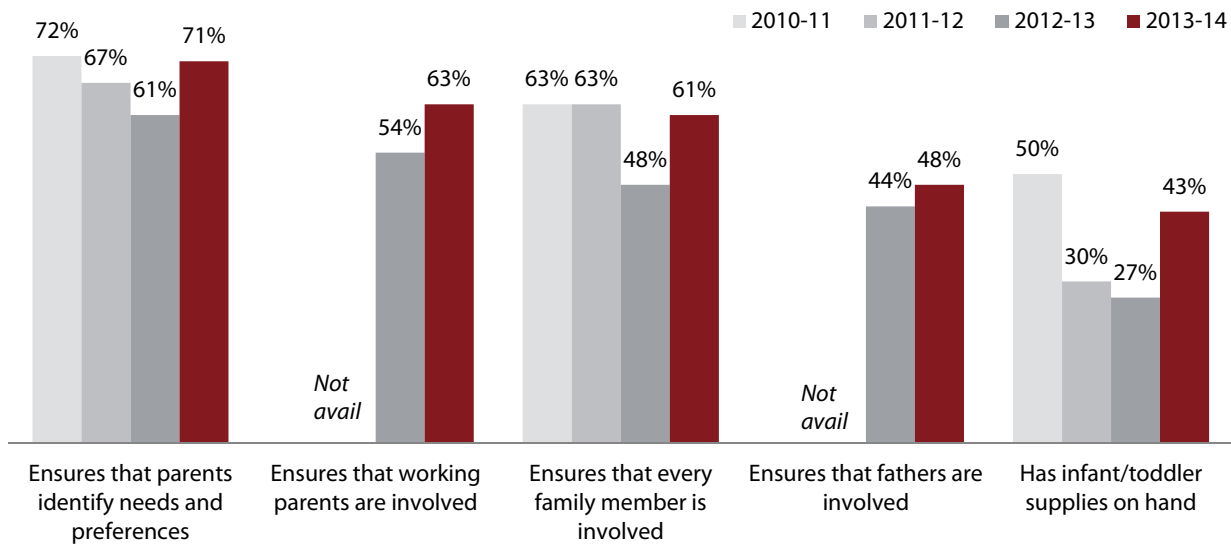
fathers (60 percent compared to 68 percent) or invited special guests on topics related to fatherhood (32 percent compared to 46 percent).

Working parents represent a substantial portion of F5MC participants; according to the 2011-12 parent interview, 49 percent of fathers and 28 percent of mothers were working full-time or part-time. As illustrated in Exhibit 5, with the exception of one activity – providing childcare during services, which decreased from 69 percent to 64 percent – a greater portion of funded partners are engaging in activities to encourage working parent participation than last year. Eighty-eight percent of funded agencies reported holding events in the evening, and just under two-thirds (64 percent) provided childcare during services and/or developed outreach materials that target working parents. A far lower proportion of agencies, albeit larger than last year, reported that they conduct outreach and/or hold activities at workplaces.

Family-centered activities are on the rise, but F5MC and funded partners can do even more to prevent service attrition.
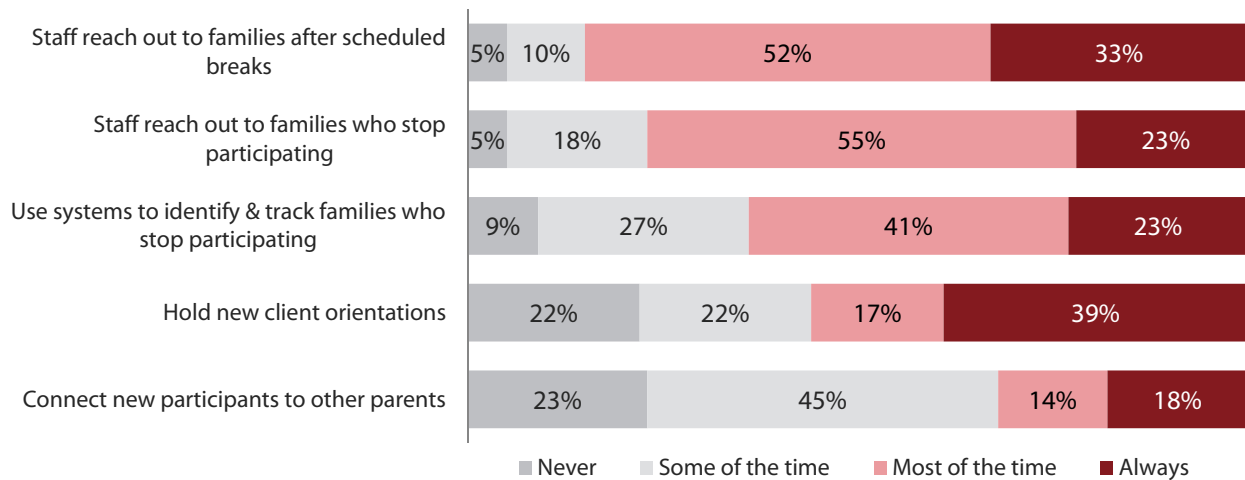
A larger percentage of funded partners engaged in a variety of family-centered activities than in 2012-13, when there was a drop several areas compared to prior years (Exhibit 6). In 2013-14, more than half of funded agencies worked to ensure that parents identified their needs and to involve working parents and all family members in service provision.

E6. Frequency of Family-Centered Activities *(Percent of Agencies)*, **FY 10-11 to 13-14**

Legend: 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14

- Ensures that parents identify needs and preferences: 72%, 67%, 61%, 71%
- Ensures that working parents are involved: Not avail, Not avail, 54%, 63%
- Ensures that every family member is involved: 63%, 63%, 48%, 61%
- Ensures that fathers are involved: Not avail, Not avail, 44%, 48%
- Has infant/toddler supplies on hand: 50%, 30%, 27%, 43%

Based on findings from the 2012-13 Program Attrition Study, F5MC encouraged funded agencies to engage in intentional conversations about how a host of factors (i.e., outreach, hours of operation, breaks in service, fostering community and setting expectations, tracking disengaged participants) may impact service retention. Along those lines, funded partners were asked about how they encourage sustained family participation in F5MC services (Exhibit 7). Most agencies reported that reach out to families after they disengage (78 percent) and/or after scheduled breaks (85 percent), and track those that stop participating (64 percent) *always* or *most of the time*. However, a smaller proportion reported undertaking more preventative measures *always* or *most of the time*, such as holding new client orientations or connecting new participants to other participants (56 percent and 32 percent, respectively).

E7. How Program Encourages Family Participation *(Percent of Agencies)*, **FY 13-14**

	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
Staff reach out to families after scheduled breaks	5%	10%	52%	33%
Staff reach out to families who stop participating	5%	18%	55%	23%
Use systems to identify & track families who stop participating	9%	27%	41%	23%
Hold new client orientations	22%	22%	17%	39%
Connect new participants to other parents	23%	45%	14%	18%

■ Never   ■ Some of the time   ■ Most of the time   ■ Always

The attrition study found that parents were more likely to continue engaging in playgroup services if they had a connection with another participant; those who did not were more likely to disengage sooner. It is important to note that not all of these activities may be appropriate for all types of services. For example, while holding new client orientations and connecting new participants to other parents are feasible within most playgroups and parent education programs, they often cannot be implemented with other types of services due to concerns about client confidentiality and/or logistical barriers.

Although services continue to be offered during the same times of year as last year, there was some movement in the days and times of F5MC service delivery.

In FY 2013-14, the times of year during which agencies are less likely to offer F5MC-funded services *all month* are the winter holiday months (60 percent offer services all month in December and 68 percent in January) and the summertime (in July, 68 percent provide services all month and 16 percent provide no services at all).

While these findings are consistent with what funded partners reported last year, there were some shifts in the time of day and day of the week that regularly scheduled F5MC-funded services are offered. In particular, there were increases in the percent of agencies that report providing services on weekday mornings (from 82 to 96 percent), weekday afternoons (from 86 to 100 percent), and weekends (from 32 to 48 percent). On the other hand, the portion that report offering regularly scheduled services on weekday evenings decreased from 82 to 64 percent.

According to funded partners, staffing is the most common issue that prevents them from providing services outside of regular hours, with over two-thirds of agencies reporting insufficient staff as a barrier (Exhibit 8). Additionally, it is important to note that staffing, financial, and legal issues may be related to each other.

E8. Barriers to Providing Services Outside of Regular Hours *(Percent of Agencies)***, FY 13-14**

Insufficient staff	Financial	Low demand	Legal (e.g., union restrictions)
68%	44%	40%	16%
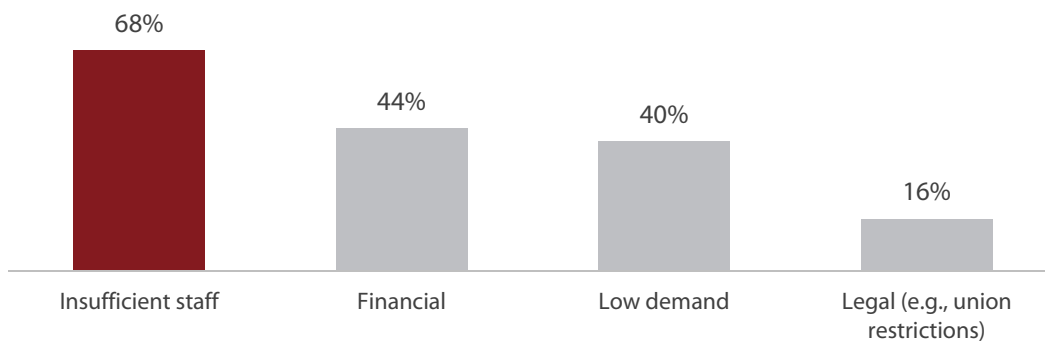
Systems Navigation

Leveraging relationships and modernizing the referral processes are making systems navigation easier for families

Families with young children are more likely to benefit from a strong and seamless system to help meet their parent development, child care, and child health needs. Those goals are easier to reach when the systems designed to meet those needs are able to proactively coordinate and align their efforts. Over the past several years, F5MC has worked closely with its funded partners to improve referral, tracking and follow-up procedures that help ensure families successfully engage with the services they need. During that time, F5MC and funded partners have also worked to strengthen connections between agencies in order to leverage resources, reduce service duplication, and optimally support the county's young children and families. This section of the report describes efforts to modernize referral processes and highlights efforts to strengthen the system of funded services.

Electronic data systems are increasingly important in referrals and tracking.

Referrals to other F5MC funded agencies help families access additional services and receive continuity of care. In this system, coordinating referrals, tracking, and follow-up is crucial to ensuring that families receive the care that they need.

Referral methods. Funded partners use a range of methods to make and track referrals. Starting in 2010-11, the main three methods have included phone calls, conversations with parents, and paper referral forms. This year, for the first time, the percentage of agencies that reported using the Persimmony data system (64 percent) surpassed the percentage of agencies using the paper referral form (44 percent). There was also a decrease in the percentage of agencies that reported using faxes and Monterey County 2-1-1 (both down from 45 percent last year to 36 percent this year). The Persimmony data system may allow agencies to better communicate their referrals and to more efficiently track them.

E9. Method of Referral to other F5MC Agencies, FY 10-11 to 13-14
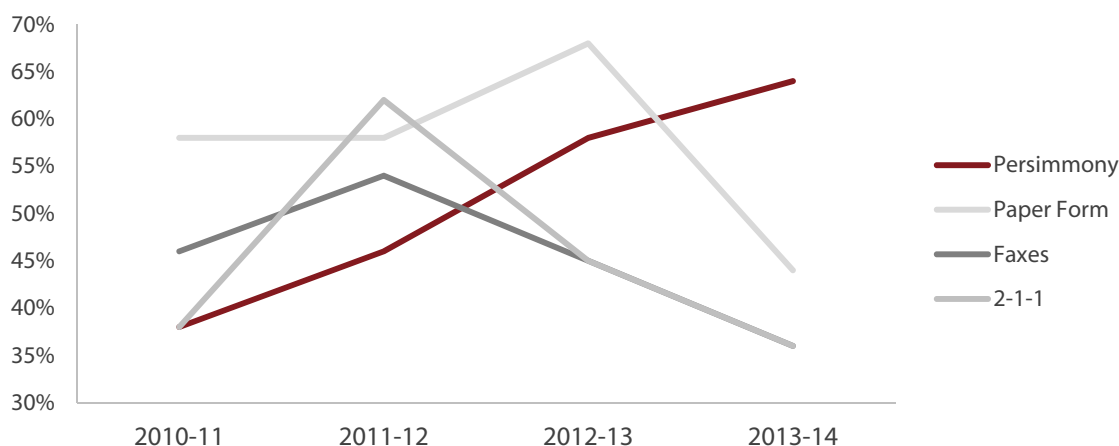
Referral tracking and follow up. Funded agencies are also using electronic systems to track referrals. Seventy-one percent of agencies reported using Persimmony for referral tracking, and 21 percent reported using Excel

spreadsheets, both up slightly from 2012-13. While paper files remain the most popular way to track referrals, the percentage of agencies that reported using paper files or binders decreased slightly, from 80 percent in 2012-13 to 75 percent in 2013-14.

There was also a small increase in how frequently agencies follow up on referrals. The percentage that reported *always* following up remained constant around fifty percent, but the percentage that *sometimes* follows up increased from 25 percent in 2012-13 to 35 percent in 2013-14. Agencies that changed their referral process in the past year noted that using Persimmony and/or a "warm hand-off" approach, such as hiring a community liaison, helped ensure that clients get the services they need.

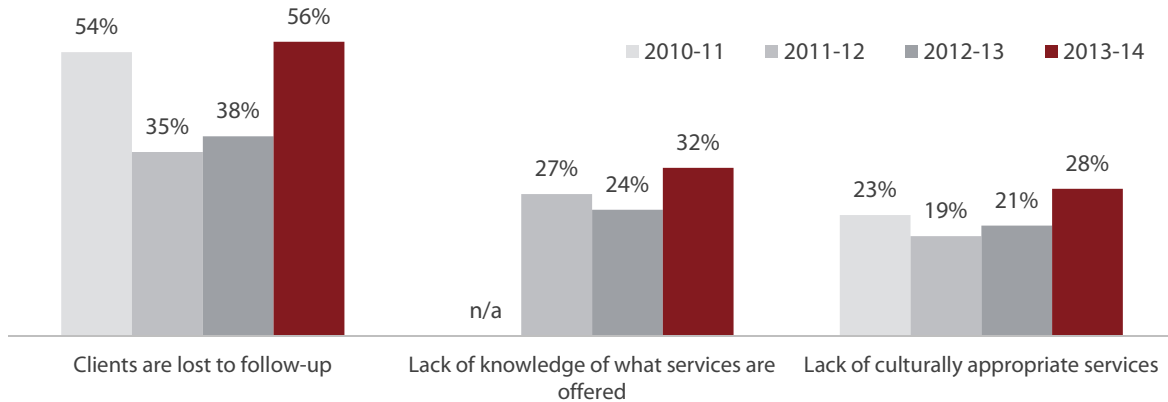**Barriers to successful referrals are increasing.**

In 2012-13, there was a notable drop in the percentage of agencies that reported various barriers to successful referrals. This year, however, funded partners reported that these factors once again presented a challenge, and in some cases were greater challenges than before. The most commonly reported barriers include:

- Waiting list – 68 percent reported this as a barrier, compared to 17 percent in 2012-13 and 62 percent in 2011-12.
- Lack of appropriate resources in the region – 68 percent reported this as a barrier, compared to 55 percent in 2012-13 and 65 percent in 2011-12.
- Lack of culturally appropriate services – 68 percent reported this as a barrier, compared to 55 percent in 2012-13 and 65 percent in 2011-12.
- Clients lost to follow-up – 56 percent reported this as a barrier, compared to 38 percent in 2012-13 and 35 percent in 2011-12.
- Lack of sufficient staff time – 44 percent reported this as a barrier, compared to 35 percent in 2012-13 and 46 percent in 2011-12.

Some of these barriers – such as long waiting lists at other agencies, lack of appropriate resources, and lack of culturally appropriate services – point to a need for deeper system-wide collaboration to address shortages in needed services.

Notable increases in some barriers. In some cases, a barrier was not only reported more often than in the previous year, but also more often than in any time in the previous two to three years. This includes: clients lost to follow-up, lack of knowledge of what services another agency offers, and lack of culturally appropriate services.

E10. Selected Barriers to Successful Referrals, FY 10-11 to 13-14

Legend: ■ 2010-11 ■ 2011-12 ■ 2012-13 ■ 2013-14

Clients are lost to follow-up: 54%, 35%, 38%, 56%

Lack of knowledge of what services are offered: n/a, 27%, 24%, 32%

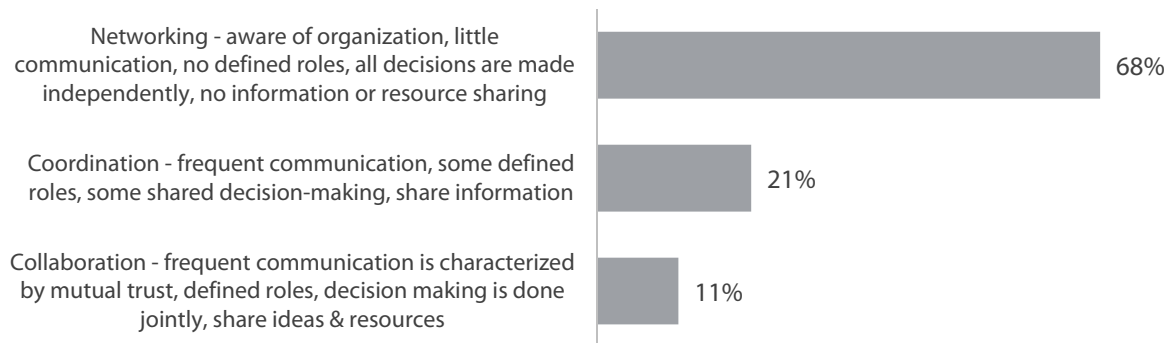Lack of culturally appropriate services: 23%, 19%, 21%, 28%

Agencies are connected through a strong network, but there are opportunities to deepen those connections.

Successful referrals and coordination depend on having a strong network of inter-connected agencies. The better that F5MC funded agencies are able to exchange information, share resources, make referrals, and work together, the stronger the system of services will be. In the survey, participants were asked to rate their relationship with every other agency in the network in order to determine the connections that exist between them.

Network connections. The funded partners reported being relatively well-connected: out of all possible interactions between agencies, partners reported that 71 percent of those interactions were occurring, meaning that most agencies were connected to most other agencies in the network. Agencies reported that the majority of these interactions occur at the networking level (68 percent), meaning that agencies are aware of one another but have little communication and no defined roles or information-sharing. A smaller percentage of relationships were reported at the coordination (21 percent) or collaboration (11 percent) levels.

E11. Levels of Interaction among Funded Agencies, FY 13-14

Networking - aware of organization, little communication, no defined roles, all decisions are made independently, no information or resource sharing: 68%

Coordination - frequent communication, some defined roles, some shared decision-making, share information: 21%

Collaboration - frequent communication is characterized by mutual trust, defined roles, decision making is done jointly, share ideas & resources: 11%

Interactions within Vision Areas. The agency-reported interactions were also grouped by funding type to explore the strength of the network within each Vision Area. Agencies reported that an equal or higher proportion of interactions occurred with others within their vision area than between agencies in the network as a whole. Vision 1 agencies reported 87 percent of possible interactions were occurring, Vision 2 reported 71 percent, and Vision 3 reported 90 percent, compared to 71 percent in the network as a whole.

E12. Percent of Interactions Taking Place out of All Possible, by Vision Area, FY 13-14
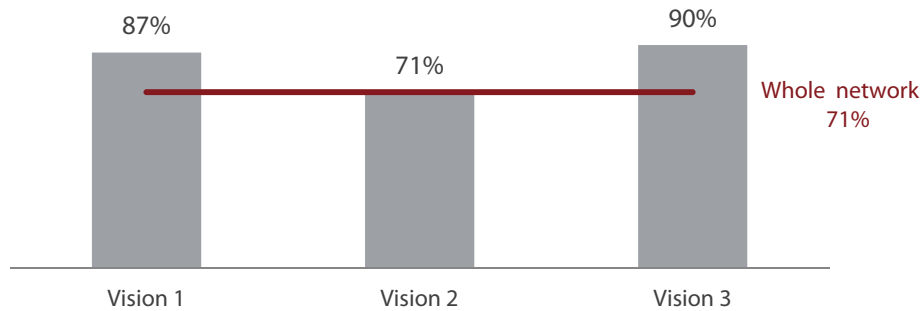
As demonstrated above, the percent of possible interactions that were occurring varied by Vision Area. However, the levels of networking, coordination, and collaboration were generally similar within each Vision Area compared to the network as a whole with the exception of Vision 3, which had a higher percentage of relationships characterized by coordination (37 percent) and collaboration (19 percent).

Agencies interact with each other in a number of different ways, and F5MC helps foster those relationships.

The results of the Social Network Analysis were confirmed by other findings in the survey. A large share of agencies reported that they were aware of other F5MC-funded agencies (87 percent), exchange information with other F5MC-funded agencies (82 percent), make referrals (78 percent), and share resources (74 percent) *a good deal* or *a lot*.

They were less likely to report deeper coordination and collaboration activities such as having defined roles (68 percent), facilitating regular meetings (52 percent), having a written memorandum of understanding (52 percent), co-sponsoring events (45 percent), or providing training for other F5MC-funded agencies (41 percent). However, compared to 2012-13, there was growth in some of these categories: the number of agencies that reported providing trainings increased by 15 percent, facilitating regular meetings increased by 9 percent, and having a written memorandum of understanding increased by 10 percent.

All of the agencies reported being *very* or *moderately* satisfied with F5MC's role in promoting collaborative relationships (100 percent) and nearly all are *very* or *moderately* satisfied with the relationships they have developed with other F5MC-funded agencies (92 percent).
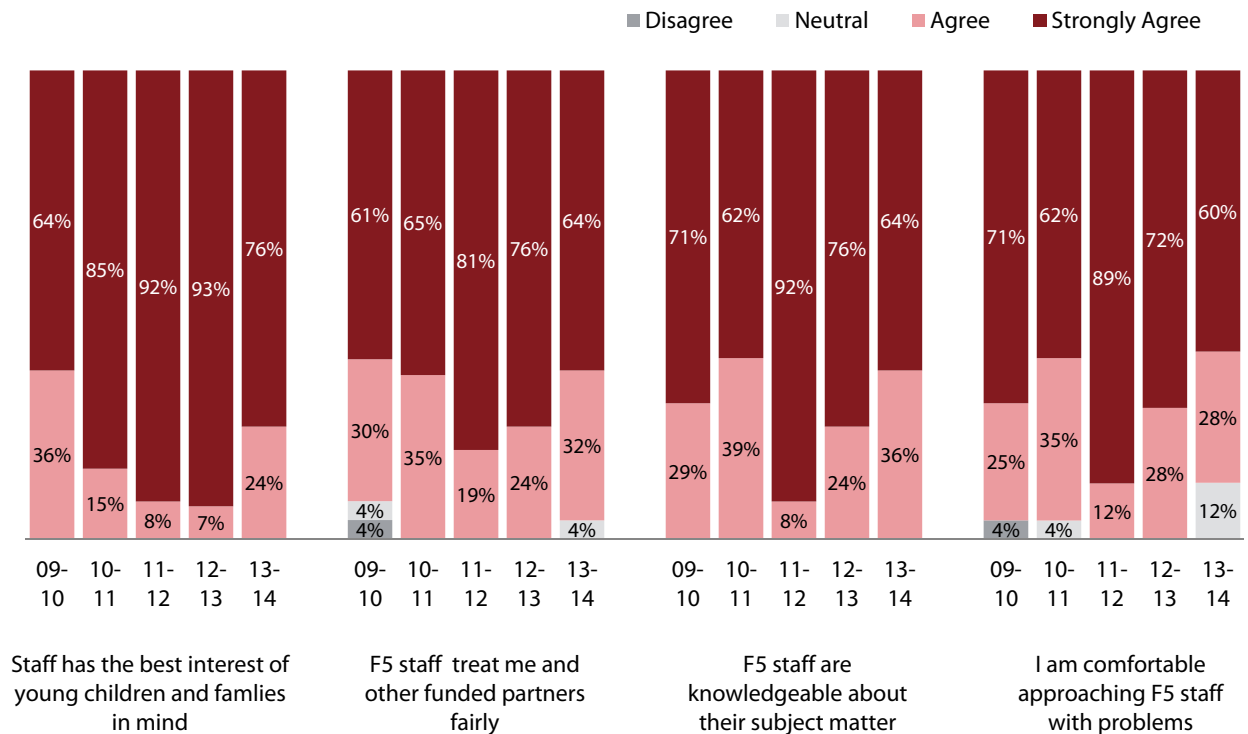
Overall, funded partners reported high levels of satisfaction with F5MC staff, though their satisfaction decreased slightly from the prior year in some areas.

Funded partners reported that they were largely satisfied with their interactions with F5MC staff, with 80 to 100 percent of respondents stating that they either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with positive statements about their interactions with staff. For example,

- 100 percent *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that "F5 staff has the best interest of young children and families in mind"

- 100 percent *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that"F5 staff are knowledgeable about their subject matter"

- 96 percent *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that"F5 staff treat me and other funded partners fairly"

- 96 percent *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that "F5 goals and strategies are communicated clearly"

However, in some areas, funded partners shifted from *strongly agree* to *agree* responses over the course of the past three program years (see Exhibit 13). For example, 60 percent of respondents strongly agreed that "I am comfortable approaching F5 staff with problems," compared to 72 percent last year and 89 percent in 2011-12.
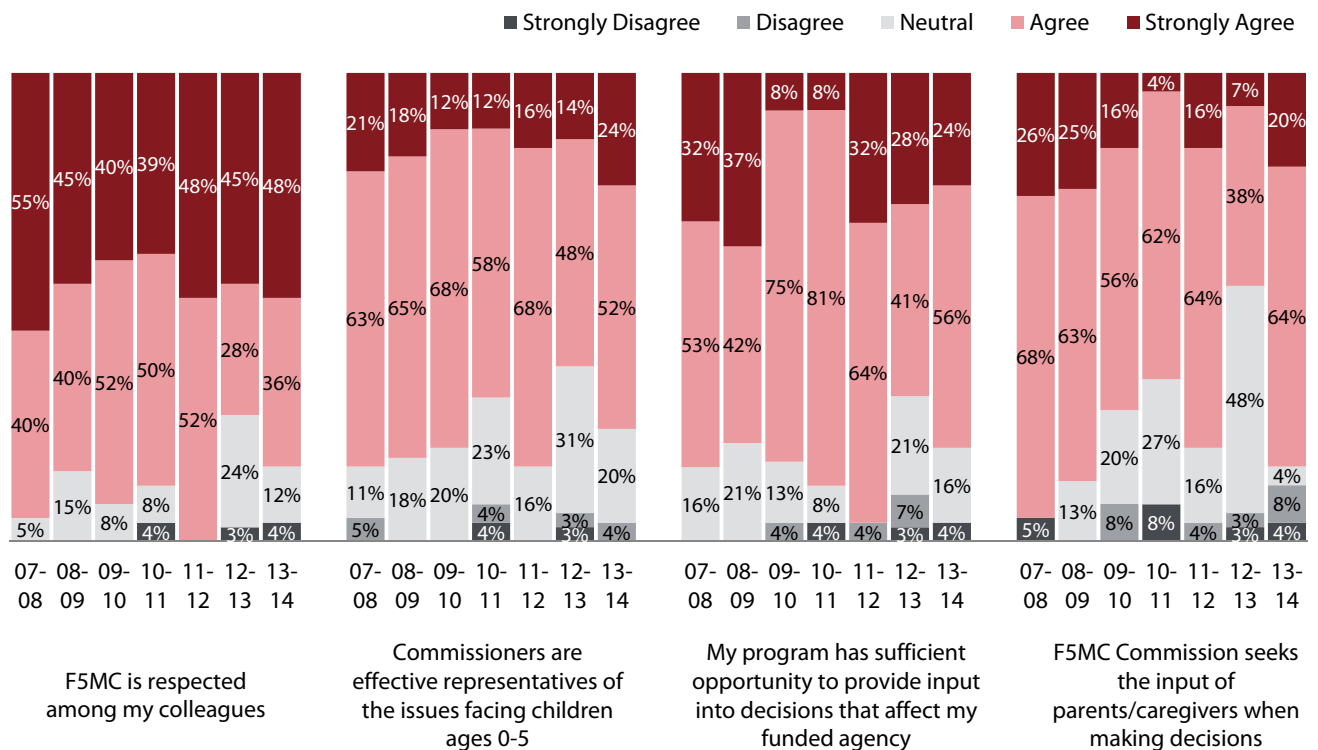
E13. Funded Partners' Satisfaction with F5MC Staff, FY 09-10 to 13-14

Compared to last year, funded partners reported higher levels of satisfaction with the F5MC Commission.

The FY2012-13 Systems Level Evaluation recommended an increase the Commission's communication with funded partners. In 2013-14, funded partners identified areas of improvement in their interactions with the Commission and perceive the Commission to be more active. For example, 84 percent of funded partners *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the F5MC Commission "seeks the input of parents/caregivers when making decisions," compared to 45 percent last year (Exhibit 14). Funded partners also increasingly felt that commissioners were effective representatives of the issues facing children ages zero to five.

E14. Funded Partners' Satisfaction with F5MC Commission, FY 07-08 to FY13-14

Legend: ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree □ Neutral ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

F5MC is respected among my colleagues

Commissioners are effective representatives of the issues facing children ages 0-5

My program has sufficient opportunity to provide input into decisions that affect my funded agency

F5MC Commission seeks the input of parents/caregivers when making decisions

Funded partners found a range of F5MC's technical assistance activities to be highly satisfactory.

Agencies had positive feedback on F5MC's technical assistance activities, highlighting their helpful responses, timely support, and high-quality consultants. Some agencies suggested that it might be helpful to have more people who they could contact with questions, and to have consultants stay longer when providing technical assistance. Exhibit 15 shows the five areas that were most highly rated by funded agencies.

E15. Funded Partners' Satisfaction with F5MC Technical Assistance, FY 13-14

Legend: ■ Poor ■ Fair ■ Satisfactory ■ Good ■ Excellent

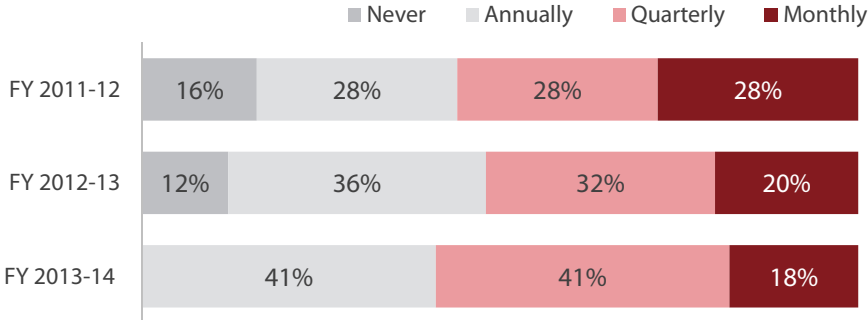| Category	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Support for designing appropriate child development activities	9%	27%	64%
Support with the Persimmony database	12%	24%	64%
Infant-Family and Early Childhood Mental Health training series	14%	24%	62%
Coordinating services	18%	18%	64%
Assistance developing your agency's budget	5% (Fair) / 14% (Satisfactory)	18%	64%

Policy and Advocacy

Funded partners are increasingly comfortable promoting early childhood development

A core function of F5MC is to increase awareness and educate the community about the importance of early childhood development. In recent years, F5MC has proactively partnered with funded agencies, community partners, and public and private sector leaders to help spur collective action required to support policies that benefit young children, families, and communities. In past years, F5MC funded partners expressed an interest in increasing their engagement in policy and advocacy, and data from this year reveals small but meaningful advances in advocacy activities at the state and local levels as well as increased comfort in engaging in advocacy efforts. This report includes selected findings about F5MC's policy and advocacy work; a deeper analysis that incorporates results from the funded partner survey as well as key stakeholder interviews and media tracking will be released later this year.

Funded partners are more actively advocating for policy change at the local and state level.

In 2012-2013, F5MC funded partners indicated that they were seeking more opportunities to become involved in advocacy and policy change. This year, funded partners stated that they were more active in advocating for policy change at the state or local level. Notably, as illustrated in Exhibit 16, no funded agencies indicated that they *never* advocate for policy change at the local or state level this year.

E16. Frequency of Advocating for Policy Change at the Local or State Level, FY11-12 to FY13-14

	Never	Annually	Quarterly	Monthly
FY 2011-12	16%	28%	28%	28%
FY 2012-13	12%	36%	32%	20%
FY 2013-14		41%	41%	18%

Funded partners reported a greater capacity to advocate for policy change, including higher comfort levels and fewer barriers.

In terms of specific advocacy activities, funded partners felt they had *strong* or *very strong* capacity to serve as a voice for early childhood policies and concerns at the local level (48 percent) and to develop talking points and messages for diverse target audiences (44 percent). On the other hand, they reported less capacity to organize and mobilize—specifically, they rated their capacity as *low* or *very low* in using media to gain visibility for early childhood development (46 percent), organizing and mobilizing grassroots constituencies (44 percent and 48 percent, respectively), and gaining visibility and credibility with key policymakers and influencers (48 percent). These findings are similar to prior years.

Funded agencies also reported decreases in two types of barriers to advocacy: a lack of awareness and understanding about the local policy landscape (from 41 to 32 percent) and legal restrictions (30 to 16 percent). These changes may be partially due to some of the work that F5MC staff has been doing to raise awareness among funded partners. Finally, agencies indicated that F5MC could help them feel more comfortable advocating on behalf of young children and families by providing position statements and research data, sending email updates, offering more training, providing materials and posters, and organizing more opportunities for advocacy work.

Recommendations

The 2013-14 F5MC Systems-Level Evaluation Report offers valuable insights into how well F5MC's funded partners are serving Monterey County's youngest children and their families. The real value of this report, however, is based not only on the knowledge it provides, but also on the dialogue and, ultimately, the improvements in service provision it generates. With that in mind, we offer the following recommendations that may guide the F5MC Commission in putting the findings of this report into practice.

Reflect on why the location of services and/or lack of transportation appear to be growing challenges for service participants, and explore potential solutions.

These two factors, along with a growing portion of clients that reportedly walk to services, point to the need for further exploration about the extent to which funded services are being provided in the places where clients live, work, and gather, and the burden placed on target populations to get themselves to needed services. F5MC and funded partners should explore potential causes of this shift (e.g., services provided in different locations, change in where participants live, reduced public transportation options) and consider ways to address the relevant obstacles when possible. When considering the most appropriate and effective configuration of service location and transportation assistance, F5MC and funded agencies should bear in mind both the location of services (i.e., more densely-populated Salinas vs. more rural South County) and the nature of services (i.e., for the general population vs. specialized services).

Continue to identify opportunities for increasing the engagement of fathers and working parents.

Actively taking steps to encourage the participation of fathers and working parents in service provision is still an emerging area for funded partners. Given that the bulk of F5MC participants are in two-parent households and that a substantial share of parents work full- or part-time, this is an area well worth reflection. F5MC and funded partners may benefit from exploring promising practices for engaging fathers and working parents that are emerging among funded partners and/or other service providers who work with comparable target populations. They might also benefit from sharing their experiences and perspectives about the optimal levels of engaging in such activities, given the diverse needs and characteristics of target populations.

Take steps to prevent families from prematurely disengaging in funded services.

Fifty-six percent of funded partners reported holding new client orientations *always* or *most of the time* and 32 percent reported connecting new participants to others *always* or *most of the time*. However, the attrition study found that parents were more likely to continue engaging in playgroup services if they had a connection with another participant; those who did not were more likely to disengage sooner. Given that information, F5MC and funded partners should continue and expand their efforts to prevent service attrition by holding new client orientations and/or connecting participants with each other.

Deepen F5MC's understanding of funded partners' barriers to providing services outside traditional hours.

Insufficient staff, followed by financial constraints and perceived low demand, were reported as the greatest barriers to providing services outside of traditional hours. F5MC and agencies should continue to learn more about these barriers, including the extent to which there is a demand for services outside of regular hours. F5MC and funded partners may then explore options for addressing those challenges, such as shifting staffing hours.

Continue to promote collaboration among funded partners, especially those within the same vision area.

Overall, about one-third of interactions among funded partners occur at the *coordination* level (21 percent) or the *collaboration* level (11 percent). Among Vision 1 and Vision 2 funded partners, the bulk of interactions were characterized by agencies as *networking* (66 percent and 61 percent, respectively). In some cases, agencies across and within each vision area may benefit from deeper relationships with each other – for example, when making and following up on referrals. Funded partners provided a number of suggestions about how F5MC might promote collaboration. The most common request was that F5MC hold joint meetings and events, including those that build in "more time for discussion among funded partners, so that we can feel more comfortable talking and getting to know others," and interdisciplinary trainings which, according to one respondent, "have been the most effective in expanding our awareness of and networking with other funded partners." Others also suggested opportunities for joint funding and the provision of more information about other agencies as ways to increase collaboration.

Monitor agency satisfaction with F5MC staff, and focus on communication openness and clear direction to funded partners.

While close to 100 percent of funded partners *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with statements indicating their satisfaction with F5MC staff, there was some change in several areas from *strongly agree* to *agree*. Particular areas to pay attention to include agency staff's perception about F5MC staff having the best interest of young children and families in mind and being knowledgeable about their subject matter, and funded partners being treated fairly and feeling comfortable approaching F5MC staff with problems. With this in mind, F5MC staff should approach and communicate with funded partners in ways that strengthen their relationship with agencies and foster a greater understanding of the ways that F5MC's work supports both funded partners and service participants. F5MC may also consider engaging in periodic debriefs with agency staff about their perceptions of F5MC staff in these areas.

Survey Methods

F5MC continues to support an annual evaluation designed to shed light on changes in Monterey County's system of services for children ages 0 to 5 and their families. This year (2013-14) marks the seventh year of the evaluation. A total of 49 respondents from 25 F5MC-funded agencies participated in this year's survey.

Because of changes in funding over time, the same funded partners are not represented in each year of the survey. This variable may account for some of the changes presented for multi-year comparisons in this report. In addition, multiple staff members from management and line staff levels were asked to respond to the survey to arrive at a more balanced perspective from each agency. Responses from each agency were then averaged to generate agency-level responses.

2013-14 Funded Partner Survey Respondents

25 agencies

49 respondents

    9 executive directors

    19 program coordinators

    21 line staff

As it has done since 2007-08, Harder+Company Community Research developed the 2013-14 Funded Partner Survey to evaluate systems-level changes among F5MC-funded programs. This year's survey included many of the same questions as previous surveys, along with new areas of inquiry to enhance the evaluation. In addition, a networking analysis was incorporated into the survey to better assess the different levels of collaboration among funded agencies. For access to all of the data captured by the Systems-Level Evaluation, please refer to the F5MC 2013-14 Funded Partner Survey Data Book and the 2013-14 Social Network Analysis Map Book.

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- Chualar Union School District
- City of Salinas, Public Library
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- Easter Seals Central California, Strengthening Special Needs Families
- Go Kids, Inc.
- Hartnell Community College, CARES
- King City Migrant Child Development Center
- King City Union School District, Family Resource Center
- Kinship Center
- MCSTART, Door to Hope
- Mexican American Opportunity Foundation
- Monterey County Health Department Behavioral Health, Secure Families
- Monterey County Office of Education, Dads in Action
- Monterey County Probation Department, Child Advocate Program
- Monterey Peninsula College, CARES
- Monterey Peninsula Unified School District, Family Resource Center
- Monterey Public Health Department Regional Nursing Teams, Teen Parenting Program
- North Monterey County Unified School District, Castro Plaza Family Resource Center
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