



Responsive and Connected Care: A Network of Services for Families with Young Children in Monterey County

Prepared for



Prepared by



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Key Findings

The 2015-16 Systems-Level Evaluation Report surveyed 42 respondents comprising management, program coordinators, and front-line staff at 24 F5MC-funded agencies. Notable findings include the following:

F5MC-funded agencies continue to meet the needs of a diverse population of children and families.

- *Funded partners maintain experienced staff* – Nearly 90 percent reported working in their current agency for four years or more and 78 percent reported serving in their current position for the same amount of time.
- *Funded partners continue to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services* – Agencies reported staff with racial/ethnic backgrounds and linguistic capabilities consistent with the populations they serve.
- *Transportation decreased as a barrier to accessing services* – A smaller percentage of agencies reported lack of transportation services as a barrier to access compared to last year (30 percent, down from 41 percent). Funded partners also reported an increase in various types of transportation assistance offered.
- *Safety is a growing concern* – Forty-eight percent of funded agencies reported safety of the location of services as a barrier to access *some of the time*; another 17 percent reported it as a barrier *most of the time*.
- *All funded partners reported engaging in activities that were inclusive of families and working parents* – The majority of agencies continue to offer welcoming family-friendly environments (95 percent) and culturally/linguistically appropriate reading materials (91 percent).

- *All funded partners reported engaging in activities to encourage father participation* – The most commonly-used strategies to encourage participation were holding events in the evening (83 percent) and ensuring staff competence in reaching out to and retaining fathers (79 percent).
- *Compared to last year, agencies reported increased use of strategies to encourage continued family participation* – Strategies included reaching out to families after breaks (50 percent), using systems to identify and track families who stop participating (36 percent), holding new client orientations (33 percent), and reaching out to families who stop participating (32 percent).
- *The time services are offered is a barrier to access for some families* – While a greater share of agencies reported that time of services is *never* a barrier to access compared to last year (33 percent, up from 22 percent), a slightly larger share reported time of services as a barrier *most* (13 percent) or *all of the time* (4 percent).

Challenges related to referrals are increasing, although funded agencies did report following up on referrals more frequently.

- *Compared to last year, agencies reported more challenges with making and tracking referrals and improvements in follow-up* – The percentage of agencies using all methods to refer clients to other funded partners—except faxes—decreased slightly compared to the previous year. Although the share that reported that referral tracking was working *very well* dropped from just 62 percent to 35 percent, almost two-thirds of agencies reported *always* following up on referrals—an increase from the prior year.

- *Agencies reported a higher incidence of barriers to successful referrals compared to the prior year* – The most commonly reported barriers were that other resources were full (75 percent), contact with clients was lost during follow up or referral (54 percent), and that there is a lack of appropriate resources (50 percent).

Funded partners reported an increased comfort with advocating for policy changes and a growing capacity for advocacy.

- *All agencies reported feeling comfortable advocating for policy changes* – Seventy-one percent reported feeling *very comfortable* advocating for policy changes; the remainder reported feeling *somewhat comfortable*.
- *Compared to last year, the share of agencies reporting strong capacity in different advocacy areas increased* – Agencies most frequently reported *strong* or *very strong* capacity in educating families about ways to get involved (70 percent), developing messages for diverse audiences (63 percent), identifying advocacy opportunities (56 percent), and serving as a voice for early childhood at the local level (55 percent).
- *Some barriers to engaging in advocacy efforts have grown, while others declined* – Compared to last year, more agencies reported a *lack of awareness and understanding about the local policy landscape* (46 percent, up from 25 percent), a *lack of relevant skills and expertise* (33 percent, up from 17 percent), and that *other priorities get in the way of their advocacy work* (63 percent, up from 46 percent). The share that reported a *lack of time to engage in advocacy, legal restrictions, and internal agency restrictions* as barriers decreased.

- *Funded partners reported high satisfaction with F5MC’s role in advocacy and policy* – Ninety percent of agencies are *very satisfied* with F5MC’s role in raising the visibility of early childhood development in Monterey County.

The F5MC staff and Commission continue to support funded agencies.

- *Agency staff reported high satisfaction with technical assistance (TA) offered by F5MC* – The highest-rated activities were assistance with budgetary questions, assistance reflecting on and understanding scope of work, and assistance to implement evaluation plans.
- *Agencies spent less time on grant reporting, and found the process more helpful, compared to last year* – F5MC streamlined its grant reporting this past year. Funded partners reported spending an average of 9.4 hours on grant reports, compared to 12.2 hours last year. Seventy-five percent indicated that the effort needed for reporting was *about right*, and a greater share considered the reporting process *very helpful* to their organization in several ways compared to 2014-15.
- *Compared to the prior year, funded partners reported increased satisfaction with F5MC staff* – Compared to responses in the previous year, a higher percentage of funded agencies strongly agreed with positive statements about F5MC staff.
- *Respondents also indicated positive feelings about the Commission* – All agencies reported that F5MC has a significant impact on the local community. Compared to last year, a higher percentage strongly agreed with positive statements about F5MC, including *F5MC is respected among my colleague and my program has sufficient opportunity to provide input into decisions that affect my funded agency*.

Welcome

For over a decade, the F5MC Early Learning Opportunities (ELO) strategic plan has engaged diverse community stakeholders—public and private funders, community partners and agencies, early childhood practitioners and educators, and parents and caregivers—to develop strategies designed to strengthen connections and advance quality among the network of F5MC-Funded Partner services. These strategies will continue to evolve and guide F5MC’s new strategic plan starting July 1, 2017.¹

As part of its strategic priorities, F5MC remains committed to ensuring that the programs it funds embody the following essential characteristics:

- Culturally and linguistically appropriate
- Family-centered
- Community-based
- Operated with flexible hours and schedules
- Coordinated among agencies

Since 2007, F5MC has regularly assessed services provided by F5MC-funded partners to evaluate families’ access to programs that meet their needs. As it has done since 2007-08, Harder+Company Community Research developed the 2015-16 Funded Partner Survey in partnership with F5MC to evaluate systems-level changes among funded programs and to inform mid-course adjustments to the network of funded services, when appropriate. Because this is the penultimate Funded Partner Survey in the current funding cycle, findings can inform shorter-term actions as well as ways to address needs via the upcoming strategic plan.

This Systems-Level Evaluation provides insights into the F5MC-funded network of services available to Monterey County’s youngest children and their families. The results from this annual survey provide an opportunity to pause, reflect, and deepen our collective understanding of approaches that are working well along with those that may require more attention. The following questions helped guide this year’s evaluation:

- How well do F5MC-funded services embody the program characteristics defined in the ELO Plan?
- To what extent are F5MC-funded services fostering a coordinated system of services?
- How has F5MC been as a policy advocate and educator, and supported funded agencies to be also?
- How has F5MC been as a community convener, catalyst, and provider of resources and support?

Note to Readers

The 2015-16 Funded Partner Survey includes many of the same questions asked in previous surveys, dating back to the initial 2007-08 survey, and includes new questions responsive to new lines of inquiry. In addition, consistent with previous presentation of findings from the Funded Partner Survey, comparisons over time in exhibits and accompanying narrative in this report are descriptive in nature. Lastly, we note shifts across the last two fiscal years (2014-15 and 2015-16) in narrative. In cases where trends may be of particular interest, we present data for additional years in exhibits to allow for comparison over longer periods of time.

¹ Strengthening Connections and Advancing Quality in Early Childhood Development Strategic Plan Framework, July 2017-June 2023

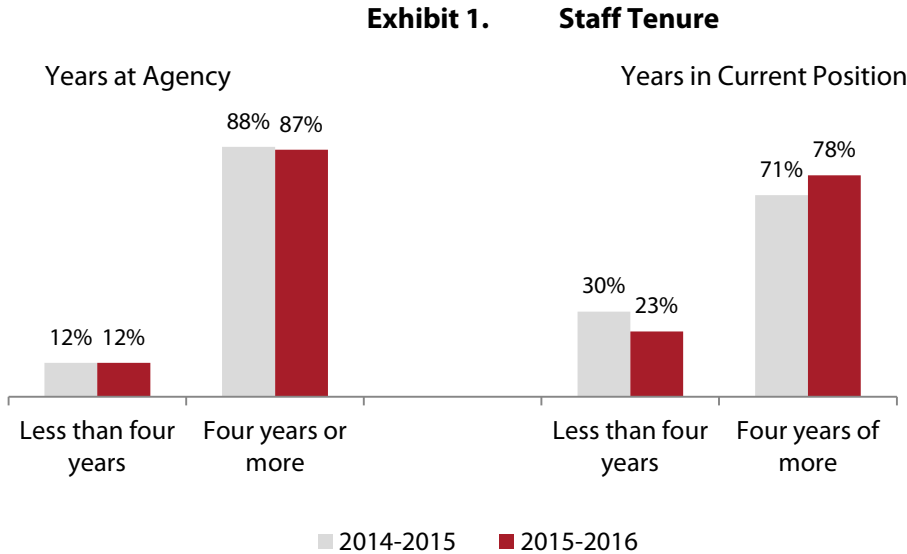
Program Characteristics

F5MC-funded agencies continue to meet the needs of a diverse population of children and families.

If funded programs and services are to meet the diverse needs of children and their families, they must be relevant to and respectful of the communities they serve. This can be accomplished through the coordinated provision of programs and services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate, centered on children and their families, based in local communities, and offered at times and in places that are convenient for families.

F5MC-funded partners maintain experienced staff across time, offering consistency for children and their families.

Funded partners reported that, as in 2014-15, nearly 90 percent of their staff had been with their current agencies for *four years or more* (see Exhibit 1). Notably, the number of staff holding their current positions within those agencies for *four years or more* rose seven percent, while the number of shorter-term employees decreased by the same when compared to data for 2014-15. This indicates that the workforce is filled with a growing number of experienced professionals who have invested more time building expertise within their positions.



Funded partners continue to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services to Monterey County’s children and families.

To provide culturally and linguistically accessible services, agencies must be staffed by service providers who speak the same languages as the children and families that they serve. Staff may be fluent in more than one language; percentages below report whether or not agency staff speak the indicated language and staff who are bilingual are considered in all relevant categories. As such, percentages do not add to 100%. Compared to last year, survey results demonstrated consistency in the percentage of agencies with Spanish-speaking line staff, and the percentage of agencies with line staff who speak English rose by five percent (see Exhibit 2). In 2015-16, 96 percent of agencies reported that line staff spoke each of these languages. Nine percent of agencies reported having line staff who speak Mixteco or Triqui, an increase of one percentage point from the year prior. These data resonate with the needs of the families served by F5MC-funded programs; the most recent Client Level Data Report from 2014-15 showed that 72% of children and 77% of parents spoke Spanish as their primary language. Only 4% of parents and children spoke Mixteco, Triqui, or another language besides English or Spanish, as their primary language.

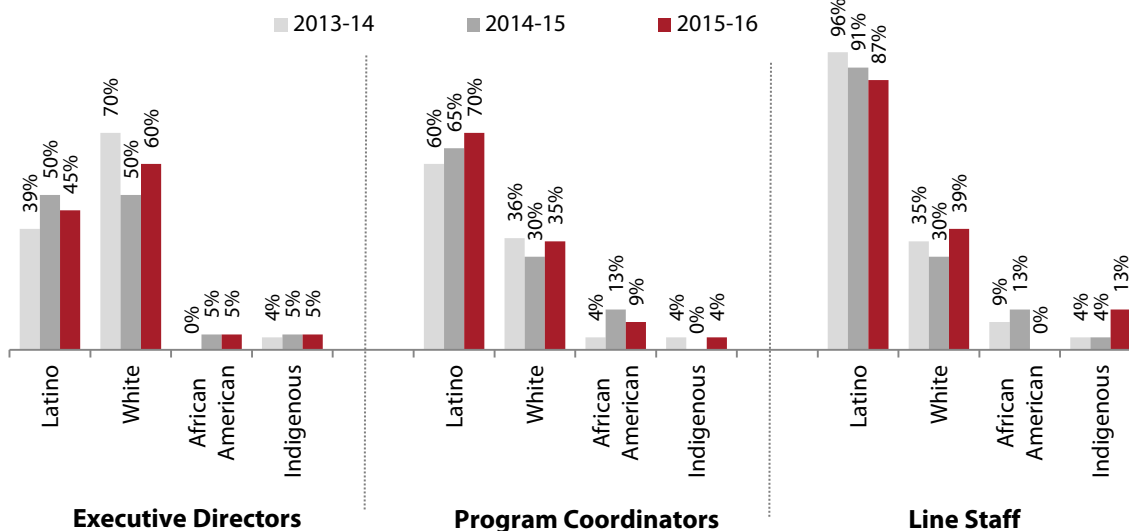
Exhibit 2. Languages Spoken by Program Staff

Languages spoken by staff	Percent of Agencies								
	Executive Director			Program Coordinator			Line Staff		
	2014-15	2015-16	Difference	2014-15	2015-16	Difference	2014-15	2015-16	Difference
English	95%	100%	+5%	92%	92%	-	91%	96%	+5%
Spanish	48%	37%	-11%	75%	67%	-8%	96%	96%	-
Mixteco or Triqui	4%	5%	+1%	4%	4%	-	8%	9%	+1%

Compared to last year, funded partners reported a shift this year in the languages that their Executive Directors speak, including a decrease in the share of agencies with Spanish-speaking Executive Directors. This year, all agencies reported having Executive Directors who speak English; this was five percentage points higher than in 2014-15. Some agencies reported having Executive Directors who spoke additional languages. The percent of agencies with Executive Directors who speak either Mixteco or Triqui was one percentage point higher than last year. However, there was an 11 percentage point decrease in the share of agencies with Spanish-speaking Executive Directors. There was also an eight percentage point decrease in the share of agencies with Spanish-speaking program coordinators.

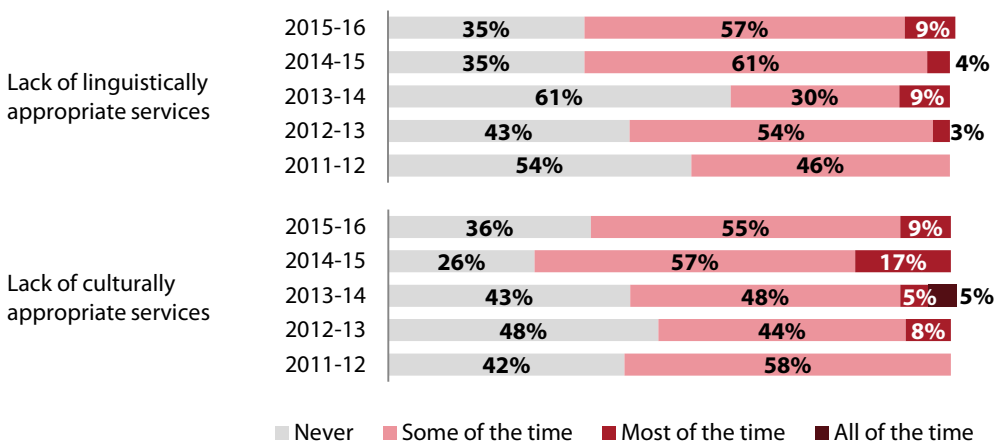
As with language, agencies continue to report that race/ethnicity of their line staff closely reflects the communities they serve. The Client Level Data Report from 2014-15 showed that 89 percent of children and 83 percent of parents served by F5MC identified as Latino, as did a reported 87 percent of funded partners’ line staff (see Exhibit 3) this year. Funded partners report far fewer Latino executive directors or programs managers, although the percentage of Latino program managers has been steadily increasing across the past two years. Although there were no reported African American line staff this year, a 13 percentage point drop from the year prior, less than 1% of parents served by F5MC-funded programming in 2014-15 identify as African American/Black. Agencies reported a nine percentage point increase in line staff who identify as Indigenous in 2015-16, more than three times the reported percentage of Indigenous line staff in 2014-15.

Exhibit 3. Race/Ethnicity of Program Staff



As in past years, only a small share of agencies (nine percent) reported that a lack of culturally or linguistically appropriate services were barriers to access *most of the time* (see Exhibit 4), though more than half of all agencies reported that a lack of linguistically or culturally appropriate services remains a barrier to access at least *some of the time*. Funded partners reported the use of outside translators as the most common strategy when they needed to provide linguistically accessible services to clients who spoke languages that their staff did not. Additional strategies included requesting help from or collaborating with other agencies, and using interpreters from within the same agency. Funded partners also reported employing a variety of strategies for addressing existing linguistic and cultural barriers to access, including providing children and their families with a supportive environment and culturally and linguistically appropriate materials, and hiring more bilingual staff.

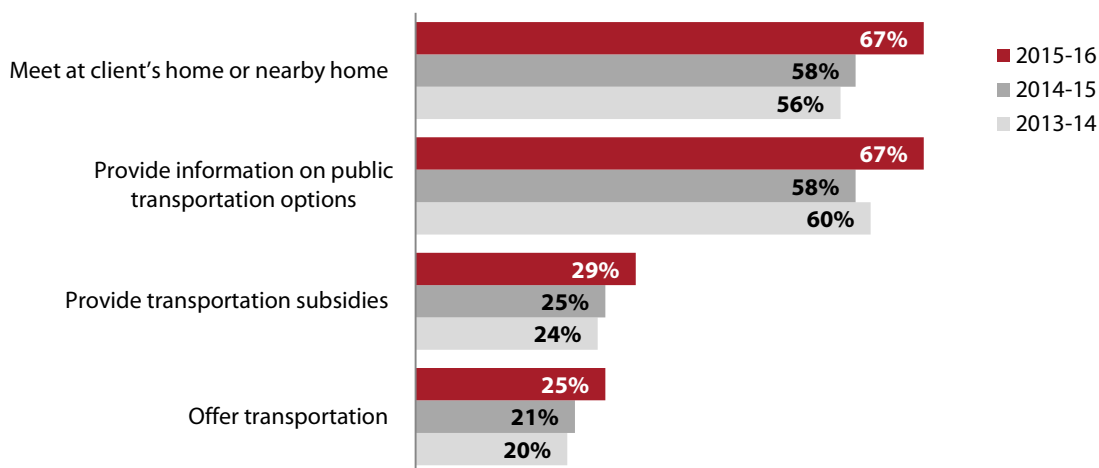
Exhibit 4. Barriers to Access



F5MC and their funded partners continue to work together to address participants’ ongoing transportation needs and challenges.

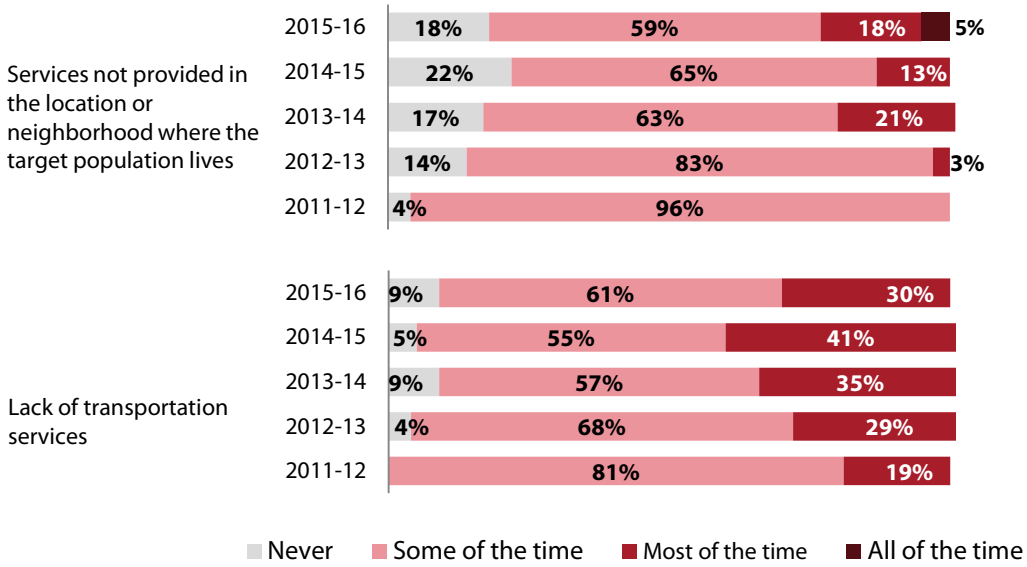
Last year, the Systems Level Evaluation Report included a recommendation for F5MC to *continue to work with funded partners to address participants’ transportation needs and challenges*. In response to this recommendation, F5MC provided funded partners with the opportunity to learn more about the Monterey Salinas Transit (MST) public transportation system by riding on the bus. MST also provided agencies with information about the costs of services as well as different programs that MST offers. Likely in part as a result of these efforts, this year saw an increase in the percentage of agencies reporting that they provided transportation assistance compared to last year (see Exhibit 5). All four forms of transportation assistance were more likely to be offered by funded partner programs this year compared to recent past years. Notably, a larger share of agencies reported that they offered to meet at client’s home or nearby home, suggesting a positive step toward addressing the growing concern over location-related barriers to access.

Exhibit 5. Transportation Assistance Offered by Program



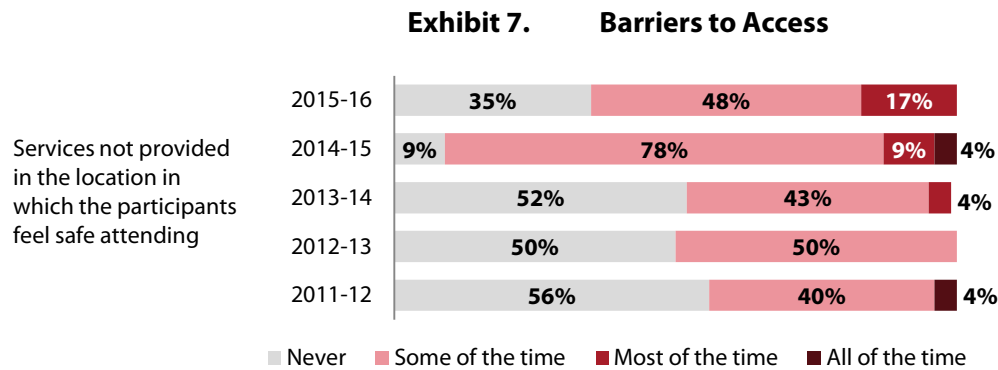
This year, a growing percentage of agencies (23 percent) reported that services not provided in the location or neighborhood where the target population lives was a barrier to access *most or all of the time* (see Exhibit 6). In recent years, no agencies reported service location to be barrier to access *all of the time*; however, in 2015-16, five percent (the equivalent of one agency) reported that this was a barrier *all of the time*. At the same time, fewer agencies reported that lack of transportation services was a barrier to access at least *some of the time* compared to 2014-15, possibly as a result of funded partners offering increased transportation assistance as discussed above.

Exhibit 6. Barriers to Access



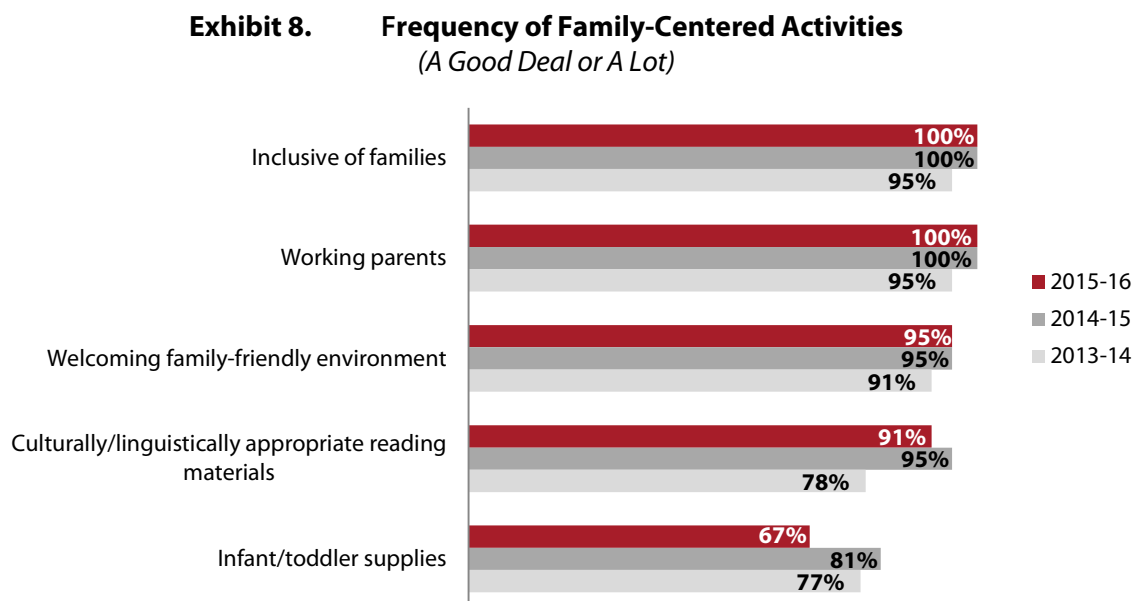
Providing services in locations where participants feel safe continues to be a challenge.

Last year, 91 percent of agencies reported that safety was a barrier to accessing services for participants at least *some of the time*. This year 65 percent report safety as a barrier (see Exhibit 7), a 26 percentage point decrease over the previous year. No funded partners reported that safety was a barrier to access *all the time* in 2015-16, but the percentage of respondents reporting that safety is a barrier *most of the time* increased from nine percent in 2014-15 to 17 percent this year.



This year, all funded partners reported engaging in activities that were inclusive of families and working parents.

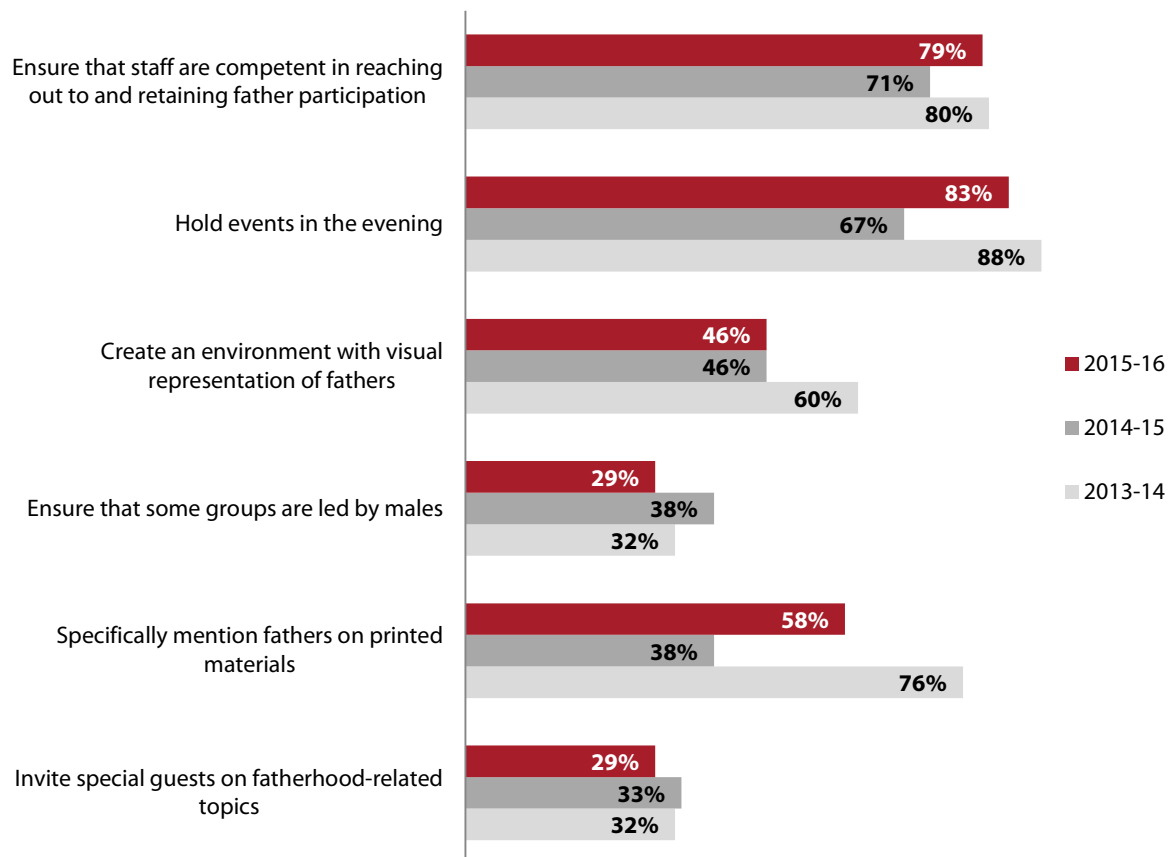
As was the case last year, all agencies reported the provision of activities that were inclusive of families and working parents (see Exhibit 8). Ninety-five percent of agencies reported that activities took place in a welcoming family-friendly environment, consistent with last year. This year there was a slight decrease in the availability of culturally/linguistically appropriate reading materials. There was also a decrease in the percentage of funded partners that reported having infant/toddler supplies on hand for families to use as needed, although the provision of these supplies may not be appropriate or necessary for all programs.



While methods varied, all funded partners reported engaging in some kind of activity to encourage father participation.

The gender distribution of parents served by F5MC has remained consistent across the past few years; last year, 74 percent of parents served were female and 26 percent were male. This year, F5MC developed a two-day training about fatherhood involvement in existing services for funded partners to help increase participation by fathers. This training likely encouraged the growth in father-oriented outreach and activities evident in these results; findings indicate that F5MC-funded partners are actively working to find ways that encourage men to engage in programmatic activities. For example, in 2015-16 a greater percentage of funded partners reported working to *ensure that staff are competent in reaching out to and retaining father participation*, as well as *specifically mentioning fathers on printed materials* (see Exhibit 9). There was also a 16 percentage point increase in the number of agencies that reported *holding events in the evening*, which may be more accessible to working fathers. There was a nine percentage point decrease in the share of agencies reporting that they worked to *ensure that some groups are led by males*, as well as a small percentage point decrease in the share of funded partners that reported *inviting special guests on fatherhood-related topics*, areas that may warrant additional attention going forward.

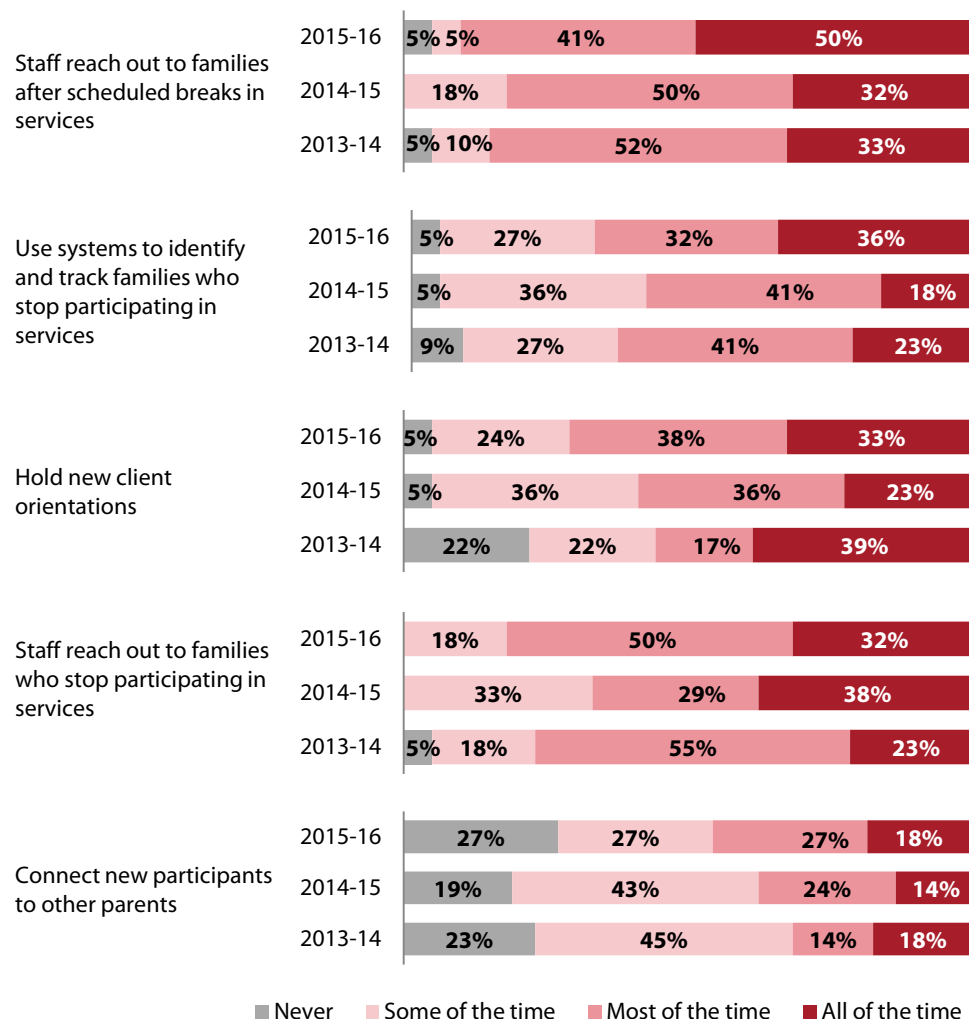
Exhibit 9. Activities to Encourage Father Participation



Compared to last year, agencies reported increased engagement in strategies to encourage continued family participation.

Funded partners reported using a variety of strategies to encourage continued family participation in services. The percentage of funded partners that reported using certain strategies *all the time* was high, ranging from thirty-two percent of agencies reporting that their staff reach out to families who stop participating in services to fifty percent of agencies reporting that their staff reach out to families after scheduled breaks in services. Facilitated networking of parent participants remains the least utilized strategy; only 18 percent of funded partners reported that they connect new participants to other parents *all of the time*, and a higher percentage reported *never* using this method compared to last year (eight percentage points higher than 2014-15). Some of these activities are not appropriate for all service types (e.g., connecting participants to other parents would not be appropriate for home visits), which likely accounts for some agencies *never* engaging in a particular strategy.

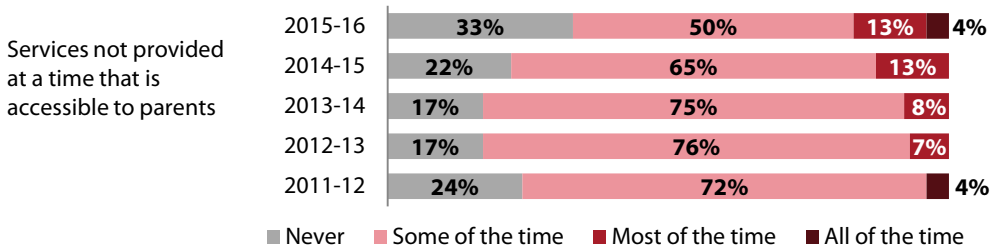
Exhibit 10. How Program Encourages Family Participation



The time that services are provided remains a barrier to access for some clients.

This year, 33 percent of funded partners reported that services not being provided at a time that is accessible to parents was *never* a barrier to access, an eleven percentage point increase over the previous year (see Exhibit 11), suggesting that service times may be more flexible and accommodating than in years past. However, relative to prior years, a slightly greater percent of agencies reported that the times services are provided were a barrier *most or all of the time*.

Exhibit 11. Barriers to Access



Nearly all F5MC-funded partners have consistently reported F5MC-funded programs are offered during regular business hours, including both weekday mornings and weekday afternoons (see Exhibits 12 and 13). While a smaller share reported offering services on the weekends, agencies reported an increase in weekend offerings of regularly scheduled programs and other programming, compared to last year. This may be in response to perceived client needs.

Exhibit 12. Times When Regularly Scheduled, Programmatic F5MC-Funded Services Are Offered

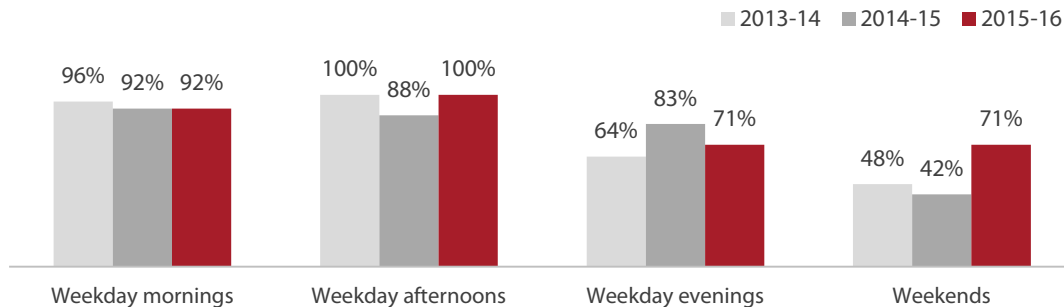
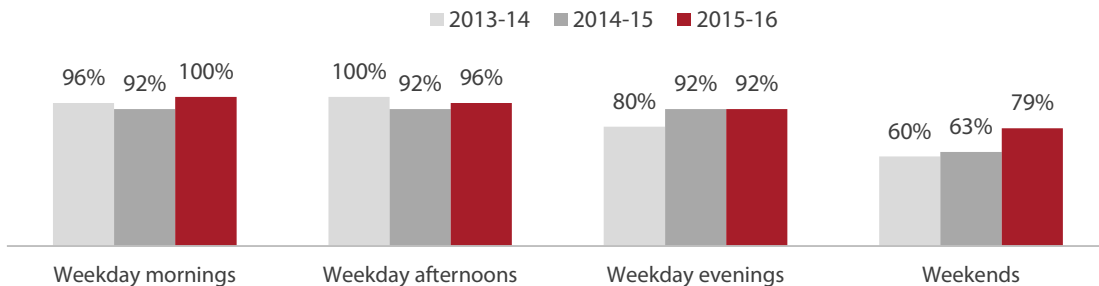


Exhibit 13. Times F5MC-Funded Programs Are Offered



Connections to Services

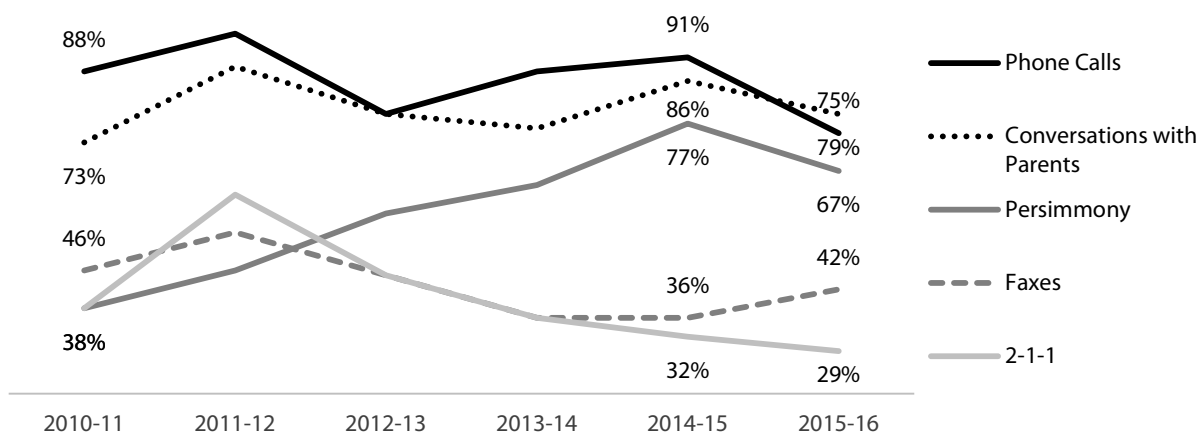
Internal and external challenges related to referrals are increasing, although funded agencies did report following up on referrals more frequently.

Because families often need multiple or specialized services, it is essential for funded agencies to successfully connect clients with other providers to meet the full spectrum of their needs. Success of these connections relies on agencies' ability to make, track, and follow up on referrals, as well as external factors such as the availability of appropriate and accessible services. With this in mind, F5MC staff developed additional Persimmony database trainings in the past year to support funded partners in a number of areas, including referrals.

Compared to last year, funded partners reported more challenges with making and tracking referrals and improvements in referral follow-up.

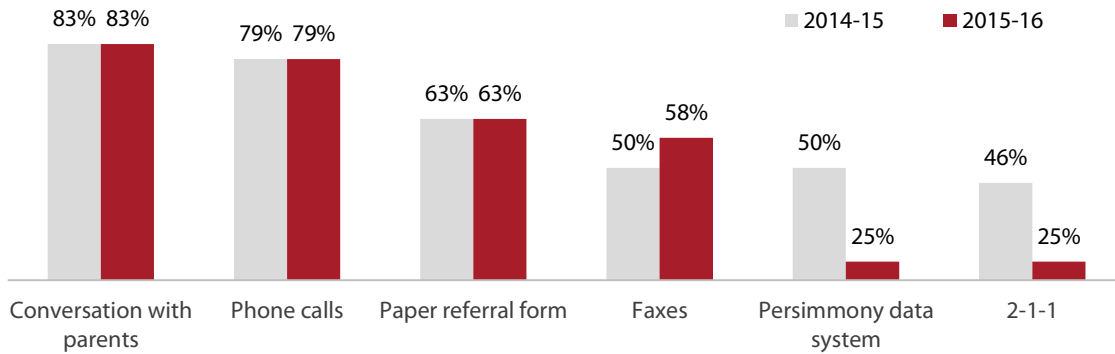
Making referrals. For the past six years, nearly all funded agencies have reported making referrals to other F5MC-funded agencies, and they employ a number of approaches to do so. In 2014-15, agencies had reported increases in making referrals via phone calls and conversations with parents, and the share using Persimmony to make referrals had been on an upward trajectory for five consecutive years. In 2015-16, however, the percentage of agencies using all methods to refer clients to other funded partners—except faxes—decreased slightly compared to the previous year (see Exhibit 14).

Exhibit 14. Method of Referrals to Other F5MC-Funded Agencies



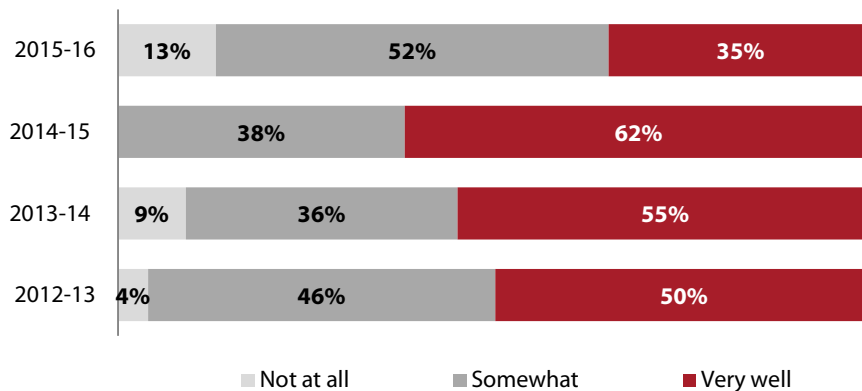
To make referrals to non-funded agencies, funded partners reported most commonly reported using conversations with parents, phone calls, and paper referral forms (see Exhibit 15). Compared to last year, a substantially smaller percentage of funded partners reported using Persimmony and 2-1-1, and a larger percentage reported using faxes. It is important to note that while funded agencies cannot directly make a referral to non-funded agencies via Persimmony, providers may use a Persimmony print-out to share referral information with clients and/or other agencies.

Exhibit 15. Method of Referrals to Non-F5MC-Funded Agencies



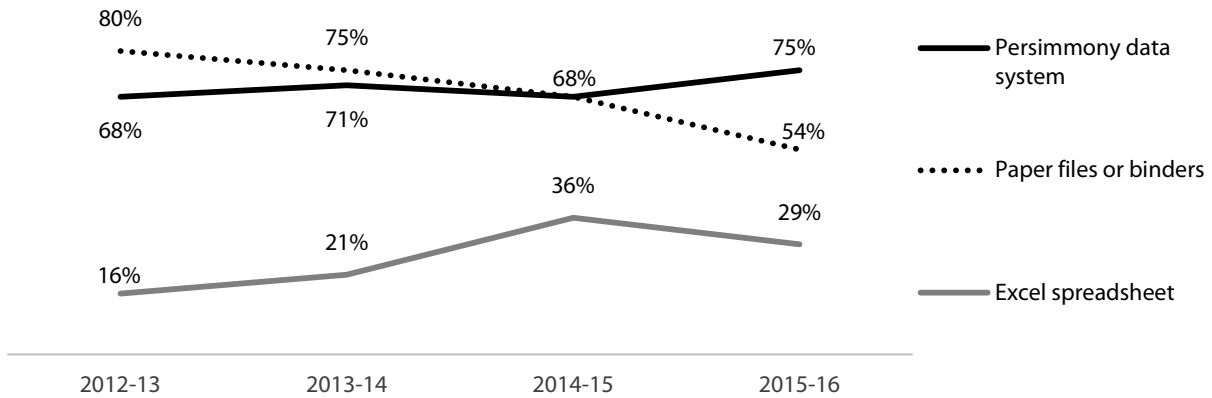
Tracking referrals. Ensuring that referrals are documented and tracked better enables service providers to follow up with clients and partner agencies. As shown in Exhibit 16, the percentage of funded agencies that reported that referral tracking was working *very well* dropped from just under two-thirds in 2014-15 to about one-third in 2015-16. Additionally, compared to last year, a larger share of funded partners said they were not tracking referrals at all.

Exhibit 16. Referral Tracking Functionality



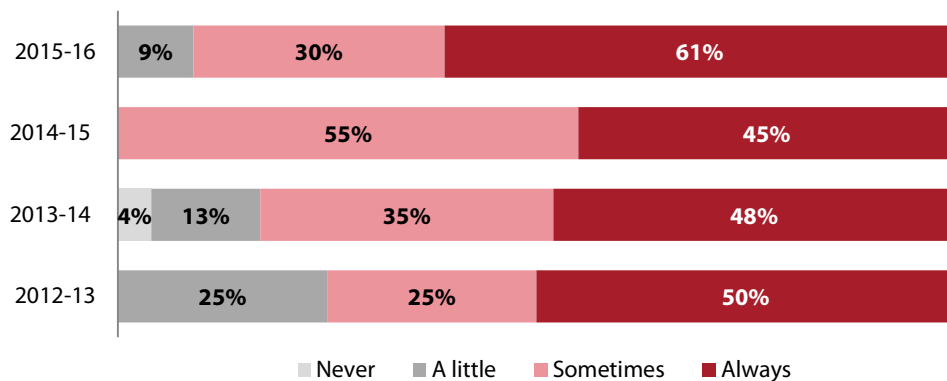
Among those that were tracking referrals, three-fourths used Persimmony to do so and just over half used paper files/binders (see Exhibit 17). Compared to 2014-15, there was a slight increase in the share that reported using Persimmony to track referrals and a slight decrease in that share that reported using paper files/binders or Excel spreadsheets.

Exhibit 17. Referral Tracking Method



Referral follow up. The last step in the referral process allows providers to confirm whether families have received needed service(s). In 2015-16, just under two-thirds of agencies reported *always* following up on referrals, which represents an increase from the prior year. None of the funded partners said that they *never* followed up on referrals, and a relatively small share (nine percent) reported only following up on referrals *a little* of the time.

Exhibit 18. Frequency of Referral Follow Up



Compared to last year, agencies reported a higher incidence of barriers to successful referrals.

In 2015-16, there was a rise in many of the barriers to successful referrals that had demonstrated declines in the prior year. In both 2014-15 and 2015-16, the most commonly-reported barriers were that other resources/organizations were full (75 percent; the same as last year), contact with clients was lost during the follow up or referral process (54 percent; an increase from last year), and a lack of appropriate resources in the region (50 percent; a decline compared to last year). The barriers that increased the most from 2014-15 are the lack of culturally appropriate services in the region (25 percent; up from 4 percent last year) and a lack of sufficient staff time to provide attention to referrals (42 percent; up from 25 percent last year). Another notable barrier, identified by 29 percent of funded partners compared to 17 percent last year, was that agencies to whom funded partners refer clients will not share information.

Exhibit 19. Barriers to Successful Referrals

	2014-15 (n=24)	2015-16 (n=24)	Difference
Other resources/organizations are full/ there is a waiting list	75%	75%	-
Contact with clients is lost during the follow-up or referral process	42%	54%	12%
Lack of appropriate resources in the region	63%	50%	-13%
The more offices someone is expected to go, the harder it is	38%	42%	4%
Lack of sufficient staff time to provide attention to referrals	25%	42%	17%
Agencies to whom you refer will not share information – you don’t know whether the resource was utilized	17%	29%	12%
Lack of knowledge of what services another agency specifically offers	21%	25%	4%
My organization does not have a clear referral process	21%	25%	4%
Lack of culturally appropriate services	4%	25%	21%
Unknown admittance requirements	17%	17%	-
Receiving agency does not have a clear process*	N/A	17%	N/A
Filling out paperwork is cumbersome	8%	4%	-4%

*New response option in 2015-16

Policy and Advocacy

Policy and Advocacy

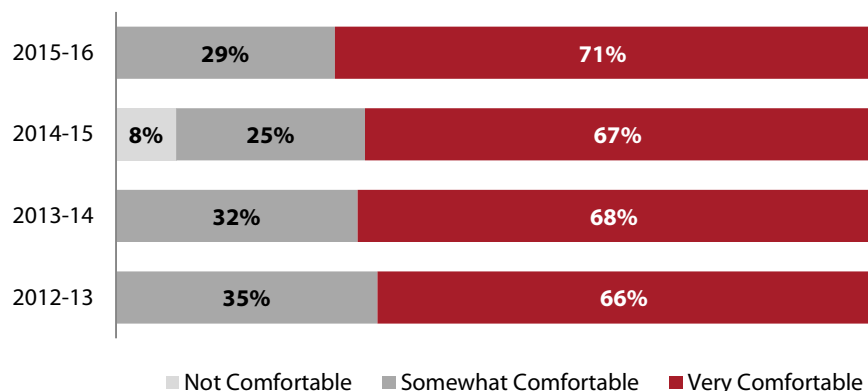
Funded Partners reported an increased comfort with advocating for policy changes and a growing capacity for advocacy.

In addition to its own advocacy work, F5MC supports funded partners' efforts to advocate for early childhood development in their local communities. This year, a higher percentage of funded partners reported feeling *very comfortable* advocating for policy changes, and that they had a *strong capacity* for advocacy. These changes suggest a positive trajectory in strengthening advocacy capacity among funded partners.

All funded partners reported feeling comfortable advocating for policy changes.

Compared to last year, an increased percentage of funded partners reported feeling *very comfortable* or *somewhat comfortable* advocating for policy changes (see Exhibit 20). No agencies reported feeling *not comfortable* advocating for policy changes.

Exhibit 20. Comfort with Advocating for Policy Changes



Compared to last year, the percentage of funded partners reporting strong capacity in different advocacy areas increased.

Along with growing comfort advocating for policy changes, there were notable increases this year in the share of funded partners that reported a *strong* or *very strong capacity* in many advocacy areas (see Exhibit 21). These areas include capacity to *develop talking points and messages for diverse target audiences* (34 percentage point increase), *educate families about ways to get involved* (26 percentage point increase), *identify advocacy opportunities* (23 percentage point increase), *serve as a voice for early childhood policies and concerns at the local level* (21 percentage point increase), and *gain visibility and credibility with key policymakers and influencers* (21 percentage point increase).

Seventy percent of funded partners reported a *strong* or *very strong capacity* to *educate families about ways to get involved*, the highest percentage of any capacity area. Compared to last year, funded partners reported a decrease in capacity in only one area—there was a 26 percentage point decrease in funded partners that

reported a *strong* or *very strong* capacity to *organize grassroots constituencies* (e.g., getting individuals and organizations together to talk about key messages and advocacy approaches).

Exhibit 21. Agency Advocacy Capacity

Capacity Areas	Percent of Agencies that reported a strong or very strong capacity		
	2014-15	2015-16	Difference
Educate families about ways to get involved	44%	70%	+26%
Develop talking points and messages for diverse target audiences	29%	63%	+34%
Identify advocacy opportunities	33%	56%	+23%
Serve as a voice for early childhood policies and concerns at the local level	34%	55%	+21%
Gain visibility and credibility with key policymakers and influencers	29%	50%	+21%
Identify and support family ambassadors (i.e., individuals who are interested in learning more and being involved in the policy process)	30%	47%	+17%
Use media to gain visibility for early childhood development	29%	39%	+10%
Mobilize grassroots constituencies (e.g., getting individuals and organizations out to advocate at the local, regional or state level)	23%	24%	+1%
Organize grassroots constituencies (e.g., getting individuals and organizations together to talk about key messages and advocacy approaches)	44%	18%	-26%

Some barriers for funded partners to engage in advocacy efforts have grown, while others appear to be declining.

Although agencies’ capacity for advocacy strengthened compared to last year, certain barriers to advocacy were also more frequently reported. Funded partners reported a growing *lack of awareness and understanding about the local policy landscape* (21 percentage point increase) as well as a *lack of relevant skills and expertise* (16 percentage point increase). Additionally, there was a 17 percentage point increase in the number of funded partners that reported that *other priorities get in the way* of their advocacy work (see Exhibit 22).

There was a 13 percentage point decrease in the share of funded partners that reported a *lack of time to engage in advocacy*. There were also modest decreases in both *legal* and *internal agency restrictions* as barriers to engaging in advocacy activities.

Exhibit 22. Barriers to Advocacy

Barriers	Percent of Agencies		
	2014-15	2015-16	Difference
Other priorities get in the way	46%	63%	+17%
Lack of time	67%	54%	-13%
Lack of awareness and understanding about the local policy landscape	25%	46%	+21%
Lack of resources	33%	33%	-
Lack of relevant skills and expertise	17%	33%	+16%
Internal policies prevent staff from supporting or opposing specific pieces of legislation	29%	25%	-4%
Legal restrictions	17%	13%	-4%
Not convinced of benefits	-	-	-

Funded partners said that they would like more information (n=5) and training (n=3), as well as more time and funding (n=2) to feel more comfortable advocating. Responses suggest that funded partners are interested in learning about opportunities to participate in advocacy activities. One respondent suggested, “(p)erhaps, our agency needs to be made aware of what avenues exist for us to advocate on behalf of young children and families. We participate in community meetings; ECDI meetings, etc., but that doesn’t seem like enough.” Another respondent asked for “a better understanding of how I can advocate for children and families.”

Compared to last year, funded partners reported being more satisfied with F5MC’s role in advocacy and policy.

Nearly three-quarters of agencies reported that they were *very satisfied* with F5MC’s support for agencies’ policy and advocacy activities (see Exhibit 23). Additionally, the vast majority of survey respondents (90 percent) reported that they were *very satisfied* with F5MC’s role in advocacy and policy work in Monterey County.

Exhibit 23. Satisfaction with F5MC’s Role

Satisfaction	Percent of Agencies that rated <i>Very Satisfied</i>		
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
F5MC’s role in raising visibility of early childhood development in Monterey County	92%	83%	90%
F5MC’s support to and engagement of funded partners in the policy and advocacy activities	70%	65%	74%

F5MC Resources and Support

The F5MC staff and Commission continue to provide essential support to funded agencies.

In addition to financial support, F5MC offers other resources to funded agencies to promote best or promising practices in programmatic work, coordination among the system of early care, and increased capacity to grow, develop, and evaluate services. Funded partners seek general or customized support from F5MC staff in the form of technical assistance, workshops, and/or targeted guidance. The F5MC Commission represents the views of funded partners and families in Monterey County.

Overall, agency staff reported high levels of satisfaction with various types of technical assistance offered by F5MC.

In 2015-16, F5MC provided a broad range of technical assistance (TA) opportunities to funded partners to support alignment with F5MC's goals and to build internal capacity. A large percentage of funded agencies reported a high level of satisfaction with F5MC technical assistance, although there was a decrease in the percentage of agencies rating many types of support as *excellent* or *good* compared to last year.

The highest-rated types of TA provided by F5MC were assistance with budgetary questions and staff changes, and assistance with challenges related to scope of work and evaluation including answering questions about target numbers and support implementing program-level evaluation plans (see Exhibit 24). Although fewer partners rated I-ACT/Networking Opportunities as *excellent* or *good* compared to last year, several agencies specifically noted I-ACT as an effective means for F5MC to encourage networking among funded partners. Agencies described I-ACT meetings as “*very informative*” and “*great for increasing knowledge of other community agencies.*”

In addition to providing TA directly, F5MC also supports a number of opportunities for funded partners to receive TA from others. In particular, The Infant-Family and Early Childhood Mental Health (IFECMH) Training Series received higher ratings of satisfaction this year compared to 2014-15, with all funded agencies rating this training as *excellent* or *good*. The IFECMH series² was designed to strengthen the knowledge and skill base of infant-family mental health and other professionals working with children ages 0 - 5 and their families in Monterey County. The training also offers reflective supervision groups for service providers. The cross-disciplinary participation also supports professional relationships and collaboration. As in the previous year, several partners highlighted this training as an asset in building internal capacity and an appreciated opportunity.

² The IFECMH series was designed by F5MC, in collaboration with WestEd Center for Prevention, Early Intervention (CPEI), and Children's Hospital & Research Center Oakland dba UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland.

Exhibit 24. Satisfaction with Technical Assistance Offered by F5MC

	2014-15 (n=25)	2015-16 (n=24)	Difference
F5MC-Provided Technical Assistance			
Assistance with budgetary questions, including revisions, staff changes, etc.	82%	87%	+5%
Assistance reflecting on and understanding my SOW, and answering questions about target numbers, etc.	91%	86%	-5%
Assistance provided to implement your program-level evaluation plans (PEP)	74%	86%	+12%
Learning Circles /Networking Opportunities	96%	83%	-13%
Support in aligning offered services with best practices	91%	82%	-9%
I-ACT/Networking Opportunities	100%	79%	-21%
Support with Persimmony database	92%	78%	-14%
Assistance regarding aggregate data and evaluation reporting	87%	74%	-13%
Support in implementing the Essential Characteristics (culturally/linguistically appropriate, family centered, coordinated, flexible hours)	87%	73%	-14%
F5MC-Supported Technical Assistance			
IFECMH (mental health training series)	77%	100%	+13%
Center for Nonprofit Excellence Management Assistance Program (MAP classes) by the Community Foundation of Monterey County	70%	82%	+12%
Community education events (e.g., ASQ Training, Fatherhood Involvement)	100%	80%	-20%
F5MC ECE seminars	95%	80%	-15%
Event sponsorship	85%	67%	-18%

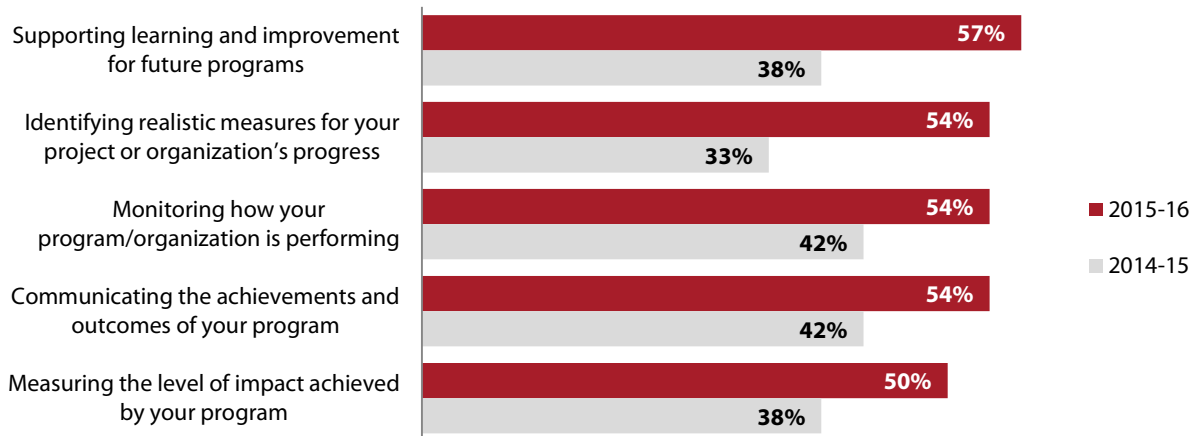
Overall, agencies spent less time on F5MC’s grant reporting, and found the process more helpful in several ways, compared to last year.

In response to findings from last year’s Funded Partner Survey about the amount of time spent on grant reporting, F5MC updated the Period Report and removed or combined several questions. As a result of these changes, funded partners’ estimates of time spent reporting during the 2015-16 grant year decreased.

Funded partners spent an average of 9.4 hours on total grant reporting activities, a decrease from 12.2 hours last year. Although time spent varied by grant type, agencies from each grant type reported spending less time than in the previous year. Seventy-five percent of agencies indicated that the effort needed for reporting was *about right* and 13 percent categorized it as *not bad*. Only 13 percent of agencies considered the effort needed for reporting as *too much work*, compared to 21 percent in the previous year.

A higher percentage of agencies considered the reporting process *very helpful* to their organizations this year compared to 2014-15 (see Exhibit 25). Across all areas in which reporting might be helpful to agency or programmatic work, no agencies considered the reporting process *not at all helpful*.

Exhibit 25. Areas in Which Grant Reporting Process Was Report as “Very” Helpful



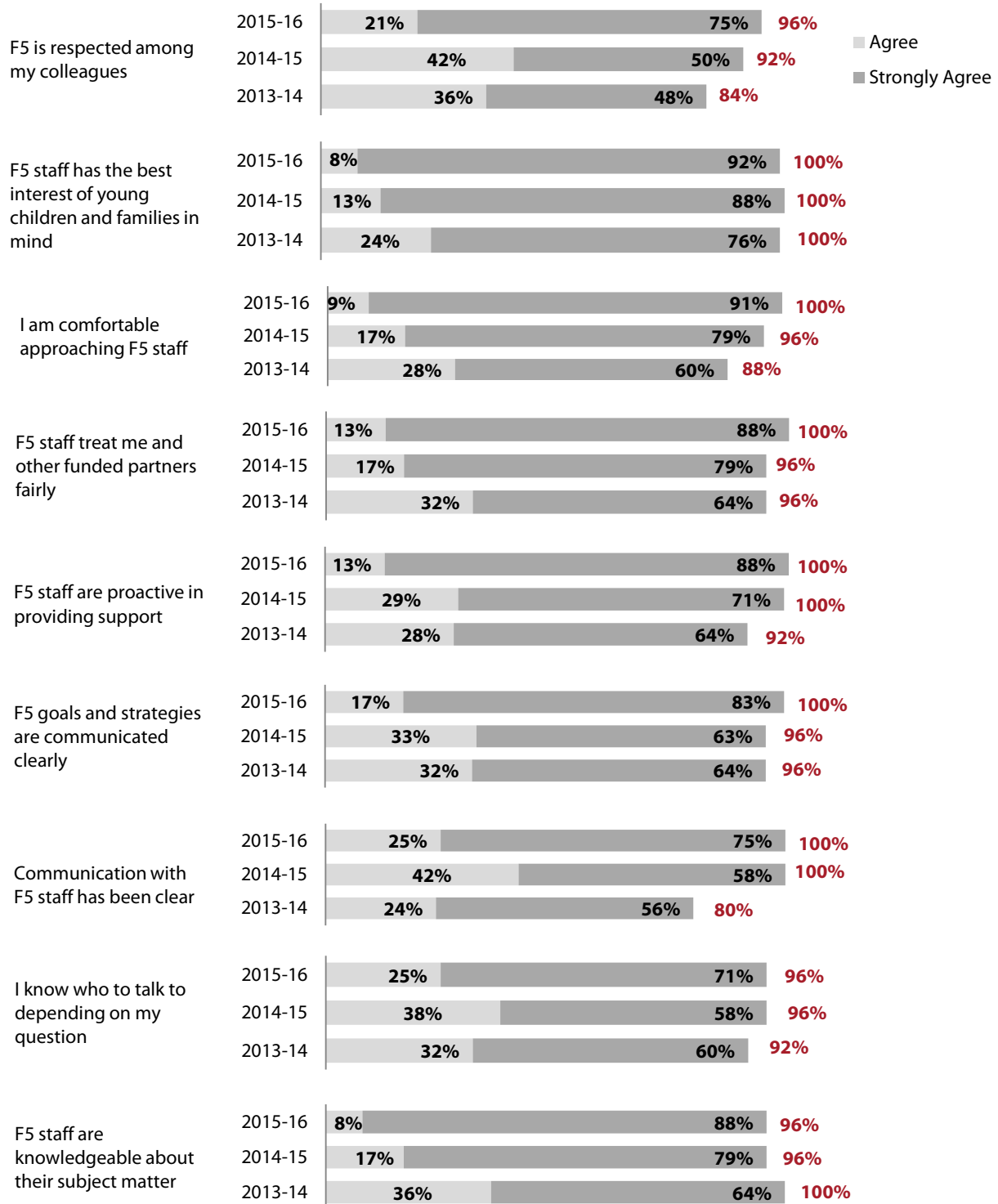
Compared to the prior year, funded partners reported increased satisfaction with F5MC staff.

This year, F5MC implemented a system to introduce new agency staff to F5MC staff. When a new agency staff member creates a Persimmony data system profile, they receive a list of F5MC staff members as an introduction to the team. F5MC staff made this change to increase their visibility and promote strong relationships between funded agency staff and F5MC staff. Accordingly, funded partners noted in qualitative responses that F5MC staff are accessible and approachable. One responded shared, *“I always feel welcomed and appreciated by First 5 MC. All staff are helpful and responsive.”* According to another, *“F5MC is a great support for me and for our community. They are wonderful!”*

Compared to responses in the previous year, in 2015-16 a higher percentage of funded agencies *strongly agreed* with a series of positive statements about F5MC staff (see Exhibit 26). These positive changes likely reflect the efforts of F5MC staff to be more accessible, approachable, and dependable in their work.

Funded partners included additional comments expressing appreciation for the support of F5MC staff. According to one respondent, *“F5MC program staff is very approachable and flexible in thinking with you about issues that may come up in working with families.”* Funded partners also highlighted the importance of the encouragement they receive from F5MC staff.

Exhibit 26. Perceptions of Working with First 5 Monterey County Staff

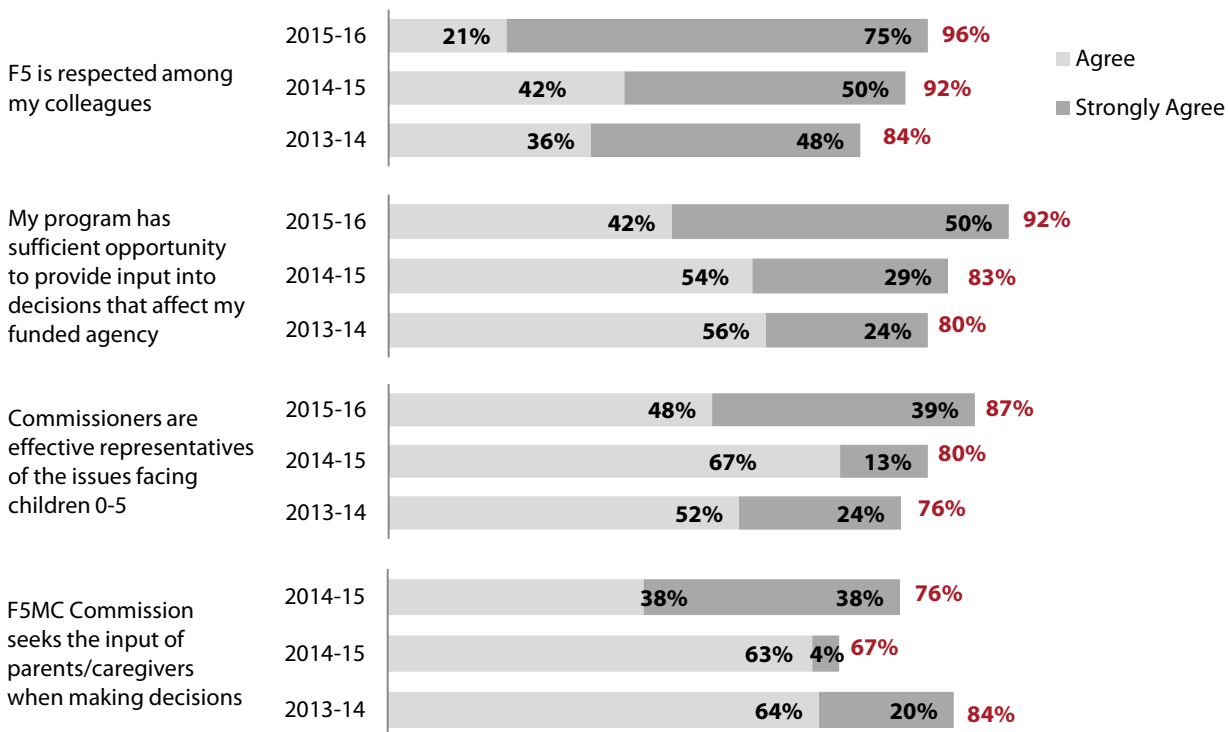


Survey results indicate overall positive feelings toward the F5MC Commission.

All funded agencies reported that F5MC has a significant impact on the local community. Compared to findings from last year, a higher percentage of partners *strongly agreed* with positive statements about F5MC, including *F5MC is respected among my colleagues* (75 percent compared to 50 percent last year) and *my program has sufficient opportunity to provide input into decisions that affect my funded agency* (50 percent compared to 29 percent last year).

Other areas highlight room for continued growth in relationships with F5MC Commissioners. For example, 39 percent and 38 percent of agencies reported that they *strongly agreed* with the statements *Commissioners are effective representatives of the issues facing children ages 0-5*, and *F5MC Commission seeks the input of parents/caregivers when making decisions*, respectively. While both of these represent increases compared to last year, there is still opportunity for growth (see Exhibit 27). Agencies suggested several mechanisms to ensure that programs and parents can provide input into F5MC decisions, including scheduling funded partner presentations at Commission meetings and continuing to provide regular surveys to ask for feedback from partners. Survey respondents noted possible methods to increase parent participation in F5MC decision-making processes, including hosting feedback sessions for community members, facilitating parent-only meetings rather than only including parents through strategic planning meetings, and holding meetings at sites where parents congregate or where F5MC activities take place.

Exhibit 27. Satisfaction with First 5 Monterey Commission



Recommendations

The 2015-16 F5MC Systems Level Evaluation Report provides important insights into how well F5MC-funded partners are serving the needs of Monterey County’s young children and families. To help ensure that this report sparks action, we offer the following recommendations for the F5MC staff and Commission. We have indicated those recommendations that originated from funded partners. Since this is the second-to-last funded partner survey in the current funding cycle, these recommendations focus on shorter-term actions and may also be used to inform the upcoming Strategic Plan and resulting funding approach.

(1) Explore agencies’ suggestions about how to make F5MC-funded services more culturally and linguistically appropriate.

Findings from the annual funded partner survey have consistently demonstrated that, in general, funded agency staff reflect the communities they serve in terms of race/ethnicity and language, particularly among line staff, who tend to have the most direct interaction with clients. Even so, agencies suggested strategies for making funded services more culturally and linguistically appropriate. F5MC should consider engaging in discussions with funded partners to learn more about these suggestions, which include:

- **Providing a supportive environment and appropriate materials.** Suggestions for improvements to the environment included featuring diverse pictures in lobbies and the use of Triqui and Mixteco words in playgroup activities. Examples of appropriate materials included information written in families’ primary languages, wordless books, and playgroup/playroom items that are familiar to participants (e.g., clay, toys made from natural materials or recyclables, *molcajetes*—a traditional Mexican mortar and pestle).
- **Participating in trainings and professional development activities.** Strategies that have reportedly worked well center on incorporating discussions about cultural awareness into other venues such as annual trainings, clinical supervision meetings, individual and group reflective supervision sessions, and training series like the Infant Family and Early Childhood Mental Health training.
- **Hiring bilingual staff members.** Several survey participants noted that their agencies brought on staff who speak Spanish, Triqui, and/or Mixteco to address clients’ linguistic needs.

(2) Continue working with funded partners to support service participants’ transportation needs and concerns about safety.

Transportation. While it appears that transportation is decreasing as a barrier to service participation—perhaps in part due to F5MC’s efforts partnering with Monterey Salinas Transit (MST) to provide more information to funded partners—services not being provided in the location or neighborhood where participants live is growing as a barrier to access. This means that more work remains to be done to support agency staff in helping bring children and families to the places where needed services are provided. Survey participants’ suggestions for addressing remaining transportation barriers included providing transportation subsidies (e.g., vouchers, discounted rates), which would likely require working closely with MST, and co-locating services or meeting clients where they are (e.g., neighborhood centers, churches, housing projects). In addition, F5MC may also wish to provide venues for agencies to share challenges and lessons learned with each other, such as at Learning Circles and I-ACT meetings.

Safety. Over the past several years, safety has reportedly been increasing as a barrier to accessing services. In order to provide the appropriate support, F5MC will need to gather more information about what the specific safety concerns are—*are they concentrated in certain areas of the county? Are there more concerns at certain times of day? Are safety concerns related to certain modes of transportation?* Depending on what surfaces about these safety concerns, F5MC may be able to support funded partners to provide parents with safety tips, provide alternative transportation options, or develop other courses of action as appropriate.

(3) Continue facilitating conversations between funded partners to share experiences with father participation and sustained engagement in services.

Father participation. This year, the survey found that all funded agencies reported engaging in at least one type of activity to encourage father participation and uncovered variation across agencies in the types of activities they employed. While most agencies held events in the evening, focused on staff competencies, and mentioned fathers on printed materials, fewer reported using visual representation of fathers, having groups led by males, and inviting special guests on related topics. Additionally, some noted other efforts to boost father participation such as having Saturday field trips, reaching out to fathers directly, educating fathers about community agencies such as Dads in Action, and encouraging men to enter the early learning field. Given the range of experiences that agencies have in this area, F5MC should foster conversations among funded partners so they can share their successes, challenges, and lessons learned when it comes to father participation. Staff may also review relevant literature on this topic, such as Head Start’s Father Engagement Birth to Five Programming Guide.³

Continued engagement in services. Funded partners reported increased efforts to sustain family engagement in services, and provided additional suggestions for strategies to encourage service engagement. The most common suggestions were relationship-building with staff (e.g., making “personal connections” with families, using facilitators/liasons to conduct outreach) and targeted services and activities (e.g., parent meetings, open houses, parent-initiated “play dates” with staff support to encourage parents to take more leadership). Three survey participants suggested using incentives—one said “we offer incentives for parents to continue attendance” and another reported providing incentives at every other visit. On this topic as well, F5MC may wish to dig deeper with funded partners about their successes, challenges, and lessons learned.

(4) Engage in discussions with funded partners to understand what they need to successfully connect families with other services.

Collaboration among funded agencies. A requisite part of being able to connect families with other services is fostering staff familiarity with the range of available services. This year, staff expressed high levels of satisfaction with F5MC’s efforts to promote collaborative relationships among funded agencies. Many survey participants suggested that F5MC continue fostering these relationships through trainings, I-ACT meetings, and Learning Circles.

³ Father Engagement Birth to Five Programming Guide, Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. June 2013. <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/docs/father-engage-programming.pdf>

Referral tracking. Compared to recent years, funded partners expressed a reduced confidence in how well referral tracking was working. F5MC should explore what is driving this shift as well as the slight increase in the share that reported not tracking referrals at all. It may be that additional support is needed for tracking referrals in Persimmony and/or using other methods. As F5MC moves towards a new funding cycle, consideration about how to ensure efficient and effective referral tracking will be essential.

(5) **Support funded partners' engagement in advocacy activities and explore their recommendations for how F5MC can increase the visibility of early childhood development.**

Supporting funded partners. Agencies reported that limited time and competing priorities continue to be barriers to engagement in advocacy activities. They also noted that more information and training would make them feel more comfortable advocating for early childhood development. F5MC should look into ways to provide funded partners with information and training about advocacy opportunities, with a focus on activities that they can engage in given the realities of their time constraints and competing demands. In particular, F5MC may be able to help support funded partners in increasing awareness and understanding about the local policy landscape.

Increasing the visibility of early childhood. Funded partners reported a high level of satisfaction with F5MC's role in advocacy and policy. They also offered recommendations for how F5MC can increase the visibility of early childhood and/or include funded partners in the process. F5MC should consider how best to incorporate these recommendations into their practices. Aside from continuing current efforts, these suggestions included collaborating with others, such as the local business community and other funders, and engaging in outreach via television commercials and social media.

(6) **Consider funded partners' requests for training and capacity building support and explore their concerns about data collection and analysis.**

Capacity building. Survey participants identified the following trainings and capacity building activities that they would like to see in the next year:

Programs and Services

- Trainings focused on father engagement, specifically fathers who are dealing with the judicial system
- Trainings about how to engage teen parents, both mother and father
- Circle of Security focused on teen parents
- Trauma-informed trainings
- Cultural inclusivity
- Trainings about infant/toddlers for parents and educators

Reporting/Persimmony

- Looking up and using Persimmony reports to better understand what is working and what is not
- Report writing and streamlined Persimmony reports

Other

- How to more effectively partner with ECDI and advocate for children

- How to sustain/increase funding
- Networking opportunities with other community partners

Data collection and analysis. Agencies shared some concerns about their limited capacity to engage in evaluation activities, specifically related to limited time and staffing. F5MC should consider how it might support agency staff with data collection and analysis given these constraints. Funded partners also shared some challenges with the Parenting Ladder tool—namely, that it can be hard for parents to understand, parents say it is “too difficult to complete,” and providers would like more support with analyzing and understanding the data. As a starting point, F5MC can refer to the recommendations from the 2015 Parenting Ladder Evaluation:

- Revisit the Spanish translation
- Consider the tool’s cultural relevance
- Link Parenting Ladders to Persimmony client ID
- Provide administration guidance
- Regularly share analyzed data with providers
- Create a format for sharing results with parents

The upcoming funding cycle presents an opportunity to reflect on what tools(s) funded agencies should use moving forward.

(7) Explore funded partners’ suggestions for additional opportunities to provide input to F5MC decisions.

Compared to the prior year, agencies expressed greater satisfaction the F5MC Commission. F5MC should review funded partners’ suggestions for helping ensure that programs and parents have opportunities to provide input into F5MC decisions. Those suggestions include continuing to administer surveys to request feedback from programs and parents, holding more community meetings, having meetings at sites where parents congregate (including F5MC-sponsored activities), and scheduling times for funded partners to present to the Commission.

(8) Learn more about what is driving differences in management versus line staff perspectives on the funded partner survey.

Every year, two people at each funded agency are asked to complete the funded partner survey: one person in a management position and one line staff person (see *Survey Methods* section for more information). As in past years, several survey items revealed large differences in how management versus line staff responded, across all agencies. F5MC should work with funded partners to understand what is behind those different opinions or experiences, including a discussion about how agency staff communicate with each other about topics included in this survey. This information may also be helpful for thinking about if and how to redesign the funded partner survey for the upcoming funding cycle.

Survey Methods

In order to support ongoing reflection about changes within Monterey County’s system of services for children ages 0 to 5 and their families, F5MC continues to partner with Harder+Company Community Research to conduct an annual evaluation of F5MC-funded partners. This year (2015-16) is the ninth year of this evaluation, providing rich comparison data to consider trends in responses over time. A total of 42 respondents from 24 F5MC-funded agencies participated in this year’s survey.

Changes in funded programs over time result in shifts in the agencies identifying as F5MC-funded partners. For this reason, the funded agencies whose responses are presented in this report are not identical to cohorts presented in other years of the survey. Shifts in the agencies reporting from year to year may account for some of the changes presented for multi-year comparisons in this report. When the survey was disseminated this year, one staff member from management and one line staff member from each agency were asked to respond in order to arrive at a more balanced perspective from each agency. Responses from each agency were then averaged to generate agency-level responses, which are presented in this report.

As it has done since 2007-08, Harder+Company Community Research developed the 2015-16 Funded Partner Survey to evaluate systems-level changes among F5MC-funded programs. The survey used to obtain the findings outlined in this report included many of the same questions as previous surveys to allow for comparison over time in important areas, as well as new areas of inquiry to explore emerging areas of interest. For more information about the data captured by this survey and to access comparison data collected during the previous eight years of the Systems-Level Evaluation, please refer to the F5MC 2015-16 Funded Partner Survey Data Book.

2015-16 Funded Partner Survey Respondents

42 respondents from 24 agencies:

- 4 executive directors
- 19 program coordinators
- 19 line staff

Acknowledgments

The Systems-Level Evaluation was made possible through the contributions of funded agency staff members—including managers and front-line personnel—and through the assistance of the following organizations:

- Action Council
- Alisal Union School District, Community Healthy Start Resource Center
- Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño/Binational Center for the Development of Oaxacan Indigenous Communities
- Child Development, Inc., King City Migrant Center
- Chualar Union School District
- City of Salinas, Public Library
- Community Action Partnership (CAPSLO)
- Easter Seals Central California, Strengthening Special Needs Families
- Go Kids, Inc., Nuevas Posibilidades
- Hartnell Community College, CARES
- 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 County Public Health Department Regional Nursing Teams, Teen Parenting Program
- North Monterey County Unified School District, Castro Plaza Family Resource Center
- Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance, Inc. (PVPSA)
- Pajaro Valley Unified School District, Healthy Start Pajaro Family Resource Center
- Praxis Consulting, CARES/CSP Consultants
- Soledad Unified School District, Adult School

Finally, we acknowledge the expert guidance provided by F5MC staff and the Evaluation Advisory Committee during the planning, execution and analysis of the systems-level evaluation.

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