

State of California

Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration
Capped Allocation Project (CAP)

Evaluation Plan

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Section 1: Introduction and Overview of the Evaluation

1.1 California's Child Welfare System and Reform Efforts

The child welfare system in the State of California functions under a shared governance structure. The system is supervised by the California Department Social Services (CDSS). The State agency is responsible for providing oversight and support related to funding, program and policy development, regulatory compliance, licensing, and evaluation. County departments in each of California's 58 counties are responsible for the day-to-day administration of the child welfare system, working in conjunction with the juvenile dependency court, a division of the Superior Court in each county.

Since the beginning of the decade, the child welfare system in California has been the focus of several intensive reform efforts. In 2000, the Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group was established by the enactment of Assembly Bill (AB) 1740. The Stakeholders Group included 60 individuals representing a diverse range of expertise but with a common concern for children. The group's mandate was to review the child welfare system and develop a set of recommendations for "redesigning" the system. The final report (known as the Child Welfare Services Redesign) describing a set of redesign objectives was issued by the Stakeholders Group in 2003.

In 2001, the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act (Assembly Bill 636, Chapter 678, Statutes of 2001, Steinberg), an effort to develop, monitor, and improve outcomes for children in the child welfare system, was enacted. On January 1, 2004, the four key components of the new California-Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR) system under Assembly Bill (AB) 636 were implemented. The four key components of the C-CFSR include (a) quantitative quarterly reports, (b) qualitative case reviews, (c) county self-assessments, and (d) county system improvement plans.

The Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) conducted their Children and Family Services Review (CFSR) of California's child welfare system in 2002, finding that California was not in compliance on a number of measures. As a result, California began developing a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) designed to guide State and county improvement efforts. The federal CFSR process conducted by the Children's Bureau and California's Child Welfare Outcome and Accountability System have become the organizing structure for child welfare system reform efforts in the State.

The Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration Capped Allocation Project (CAP) being implemented on July 1, 2007, is an extension of these earlier reform efforts, focusing on the financing component of child welfare services.

1.2 The Purpose of the Capped Allocation Project

1.2.1 The Central Purpose of the Capped Allocation Project

The purpose of California's Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Project is to assist the child welfare and probation systems in Alameda County and Los Angeles County in developing and implementing alternative services to foster care to bring about better child and family outcomes for dependent and delinquent children. These ends are to be accomplished by providing counties, through a capped allocation strategy, the impetus and flexible use of Title IV-E dollars necessary to create a more responsive and comprehensive array of services and supports for children and their families, regardless of their federal eligibility or placement in out-of-home care.

The goals of the CAP match the goals articulated in the federal CFSR outcomes and the California-Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR) and AB 636 system. The primary goals are: (a) to improve the array of services for children and families and engage families through a more individualized approach that emphasizes family involvement; (b) to increase child safety without an over-reliance on out-of-home care; (c) to improve permanency outcomes and time; and (d) to improve child and family well-being.

1.2.2 Alameda County

As stated in their County Five-Year Plan, the Alameda County Social Services Agency and Probation Department will pursue a series of reinvestment strategies in order to allocate financial resources to prevention, early intervention, and long-term support strategies. More specifically, financial resources, through these strategies, will be directed away from expensive congregate care and ineffective services toward services and supports that are engaging, familial, community-based, and cost-effective.

1.2.3 Los Angeles County

As stated in their County Five-Year Plan, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services and Probation Department will use the financial flexibility granted by the waiver to build on current system improvement efforts through strategically investing in structural and programmatic reforms to meet the needs of dependent and delinquent children and their families. County agency efforts will focus on increasing the number, array of services, and use of individualized services, along with an increased focus on community alternatives, case planning, and case-load reduction.

1.3 The Purpose of the Capped Allocation Project Evaluation

The primary purpose of the CAP Evaluation is to determine whether and how changes in the funding structure for foster care (i.e., ending the entitlement, eliminating eligibility restrictions, and capping the dollar amount in exchange for spending flexibility) will impact the functioning of county child welfare systems and relevant probation systems. The secondary purpose of the evaluation is to assess outcomes for dependent and delinquent children and their families before the implementation of the CAP and after. It is currently not within the scope of the evaluation to

separately assess the impact of discrete interventions (i.e., specific programs) implemented by the counties under their CAP.

1.4 The Evaluation Framework

1.4.1 Overview of the Evaluation Components

The central question to be assessed in the evaluation of the CAP is the following:

What is the impact of a capped, flexible Title IV-E funding strategy on the implementation of the Child Welfare Services System and relevant Probation System, and on federal and State outcomes for children and their families served by those two systems in participating counties?

From this central question flow three sub-questions that serve to guide the three components of the evaluation.

First, the Process Study will address the question:

What is the impact of a capped, flexible Title IV-E funding strategy on the implementation and operations of the Child Welfare Services System and relevant Probation System in participating counties?

Second, the Fiscal Study will address the question:

What is the impact of a capped, flexible Title IV-E funding strategy on Child Welfare Services and relevant Probation expenditures in participating counties?

Third, the Outcome Study will address the question:

What is the impact of a capped, flexible Title IV-E funding strategy on outcomes for children and families in the Child Welfare Services System and relevant Probation System in participating counties?

It is important to note that these questions will be addressed and understood within the context and constraints of the data collection methods discussed below and that interpretation of the results, notably the outcome study results, will include information from all three components of the evaluation. The three components are discussed in detail in Sections 2, 3, and 4.

1.4.2 Theories of Change

The fundamental premise of the CAP is that a significant proportion of children in foster care in California are not in care based on need or appropriateness of service, but are in care due to the current orientation and fiscal structure of child welfare system. Two theories of change underlie the initiative's approach. The first theory supposes that eliminating the "open entitlement" approach to funding foster care will reduce a fiscal incentive to place children in out-of-home

care. Second and more concretely, eliminating the categorical nature of eligibility and allowed reimbursements (i.e., board and maintenance) will provide the authority and the funds (through cost savings) necessary to reorient the service structure to focus on prevention, early intervention, and permanency, including reunification and aftercare efforts.

1.4.3 Data Collection Methods

The evaluation will use an interrupted time series design to guide data collection activities. The time-series design is a quasi-experimental method (Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004) that accounts for a number of threats to internal validity. However, as it is not a true experimental design (i.e., random assignment to comparison groups), *the design does not allow for statements of causality*. The notation for the design is described in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Data Collection Design

O₁ O₂ O₃ O₄ X O₅ O₆ O₇ O₈

The notation in Figure 1 is limited in its description of the CAP’s actual evaluation activities. The final number and timing of the observations (O₁₋₈) is dependent upon the specific study component (process, fiscal, or outcome). In addition, the X, or “treatment,” is not static; it will continue for the duration of the CAP after the CAP’s onset.

Briefly, observations (i.e., data collection) will be made prior to the onset of the CAP to establish a pattern of outcomes within each participating county. Observations will be made again after the onset and during the implementation of the CAP in participating counties to establish a second pattern of outcomes. Outcome patterns post-CAP will be compared to outcome patterns pre-CAP.

Implementing a true experimental design (i.e., random assignment) is not feasible given the nature of the CAP. The broad scope of the CAP—its focus on restructuring a county’s child welfare services system—precludes the development of comparison groups through random assignment of cases within counties. Randomly assigning counties to status as Demonstration County or Comparison County is also not possible given the voluntary nature of county participation in the CAP.

In addition, developing a dyadic “match” of comparison counties requires overcoming a number of obstacles. The list of counties participating in the CAP, in combination with the voluntary nature of the initiative, makes it unlikely that adequate comparison counties could be identified and encouraged to participate. This issue is most notable in the case of Los Angeles County where the size of the child welfare system is much larger than potential comparison sites.

An additional consideration for data collection is the desire to make the evaluation as unobtrusive as possible for counties. As such, the preference is to use data sources that are already available whenever possible (and without unnecessarily compromising the evaluation) in order to limit the workload required of counties for their participation in the evaluation.

1.4.4 Sampling

Counties are the units of analysis for this evaluation given the broad, systems-wide scope of the CAP. (While counties will be implementing discrete interventions as part of their CAP, those individual programs are not the focus of the evaluation.) Alameda County and Los Angeles County have self-selected into the CAP based on analyses (policy, fiscal, and programmatic) conducted internally to determine the potential benefits and costs of participation.

1.4.5 Analysis Plan

The analysis plan for all three components of the evaluation will be finalized closer to the end of the CAP. In general, descriptive procedures and parametric and non-parametric analytical processes will be used as appropriate. Quantitative data will be managed and analyzed using SAS software. Qualitative data will be managed and analyzed using Atlas.ti software.

It is important to note that Alameda County and Los Angeles County will be analyzed separately (i.e., their respective information will not be combined for analysis purposes). In addition, each county's child welfare and probation fiscal data and outcome data will also be analyzed separately.

1.4.6 Limitations

As with any evaluation, this study is faced with a number of limitations, both methodological and practical. First, the overall design—the interrupted time series design—*does not allow the evaluation to determine causality*. In other words, it cannot be said that changes observed in the patterns of outcomes of the participating counties post-CAP as compared to their pre-CAP pattern of outcomes were caused by the Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration Capped Allocation Project.

The second issue relates to the sample and sampling plan. Selection bias is a possibility given the fact that the participating counties are self-selected. The counties who have chosen to participate in the CAP—Alameda County and Los Angeles County—may have different characteristics and conditions than counties who chose not to participate in the CAP. Those characteristics and conditions are difficult to control for and may have made the CAP opportunity more attractive to the self-selecting counties, or may make them more successful at taking advantage of funding flexibility.

There are also several data source/data collection issues that will potentially limit the study. The primary issue relates to the availability of probation fiscal and outcome data. The probation systems in Alameda County and Los Angeles County are able to provide limited fiscal data for the study. More crucially, county probation departments do not have access to the State's automated child welfare case management information system and do not collect information comparable to that being used in the outcome study portion of the evaluation. Given these two probation data issues, the analysis and interpretation of probation information is likely to be limited.

A number of data source/data collection issues also face the fiscal study more generally. First, potential problems in collecting cost/expenditure data may exist. Counties vary in their processes regarding budget and expenditure data and it may be difficult to collect consistent data in a consistent format across counties. Second, the aggregate form and pre-determined nature of outcome data make subtle analysis difficult, if not impossible.

Finally, as both participating counties have indicated, the CAP is one part of a larger systems-change environment. Teasing out the CAP's possible role as a systems-change initiative will be challenging in an environment of co-occurring reforms.

1.5 Project Management

1.5.1 Evaluation Team

The evaluation team from California Institute on Human Services (CIHS) at Sonoma State University (SSU) consists of a Principal Investigator, a research specialist, a specialist in information technology, an administrative support person, and graduate student assistants. The team has expertise in evaluation research methods, along with quantitative and qualitative data collection, management, analysis, and interpretation. The team also has expertise in child welfare policy and practice, child welfare waiver demonstration project evaluations, and the analysis of organizations.

1.5.2 Evaluation Workgroup

An evaluation workgroup has been established by the Research and Evaluation Bureau (REB) and the Resources Development and Training Support Bureau (RDTSB) at CDSS and the Principal Investigator. The workgroup is comprised of representatives from CDSS, Alameda County and Los Angeles County, and various community stakeholders and advocates. The group will meet on a quarterly basis. A smaller evaluation advisory group will also be formed by the evaluator to provide more technical assistance to the evaluation.

1.5.3 Deliverables

Two major deliverables are due to CDSS and the Children's Bureau at the DHHS. An Interim Evaluation Report is due 60 days after the 10th quarter of the CAP. The Final Evaluation Report is due six months after the 20th quarter of the CAP.

1.5.4 Human Subjects

The evaluation is responsible to two Institutional Review Boards (IRB): the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects at the California Health and Human Services Agency, and the IRB for the Rights of Human Subjects at SSU. Both IRBs have granted human subjects approval. The evaluation team is committed to conducting the evaluation project in a manner consistent with the highest ethical standards.

Section 2: Process Study

A process study is the first evaluation component required by the federal Waiver Terms and Conditions agreement between CDSS and the Children's Bureau. The process study is divided into two components, the Implementation Component and the County Services Component. The Implementation Component is itself divided into two sections. The first section looks at the planning process undertaken by the counties and the State. The second section is focused on the implementation phase of the CAP. The County Services Component is focused on the strategies undertaken by the child welfare and probation departments in each county to improve outcomes for children and families.

The majority of data will be collected during biannual site visits to each of the counties. The initial site visit will occur in Participating Counties in July 2007. Follow-up site visits will commence in February 2008 and be conducted twice a year (between February and May and again between August and November of each year). The last site visits will occur in February 2012. Interviews and focus groups conducted during the site visits will cover both the Implementation Component (Planning and Implementation Phases) and the County Services Component of the process study.

The evaluation staff will work closely with county representatives in the development of interview subjects and focus groups from the Participating Counties. It will be the responsibility of the county representatives to recruit focus group participants and to schedule the focus groups to minimize the impact on staff time. Generally speaking, it is anticipated that focus groups will be comprised of child welfare workers, supervisors, and program managers from the range of child welfare activities (emergency response, dependency investigation, family maintenance, family reunification, permanency planning). Regional office representation will also be a factor in recruitment. Interviews will be conducted with executive management level personnel (e.g., division directors, agency directors). A similar process will be followed with each Participating County's probation department.

This section describes the key questions, data sources and data collection procedures, and analysis of process activities related to the CAP.

2.1 Implementation Component

The Implementation Component of the process study will look at the planning phase and the implementation phase of the CAP. The following two sections describe each phase in greater detail.

2.1.1 Planning Phase

2.1.1.1 Key Questions

The key questions for the Planning Phase portion of the Process Study are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Planning Phase Key Questions

What was the planning process for the CAP implementation?
What were seen as the necessary CAP implementation requirements?
What were the expected impacts of the CAP implementation on the organization?
What were the important contextual factors expected to influence the implementation of the CAP?

2.1.1.2 Data Sources and Data Collection Procedures

The data sources for this phase include meetings, documents, and individuals participating in the process. Data collection procedures include participation/observation, document reviews, and interviews and focus groups.

Workgroup Meeting Participation and Observation

Several workgroups have been established by CDSS and counties to further their implementation efforts. The three principal workgroups are program, fiscal, and evaluation. To the extent possible, the evaluator will attend and participate in the workgroup meetings, primarily the evaluation and the fiscal work groups. Information collected as part of this participation and observation process will be included in the analysis of this phase of the CAP.

Document Review

A variety of documents will be reviewed for this phase of the evaluation. The primary category of documents will be the meeting minutes and notes from the workgroups and other relevant meetings. The implementation plans developed by the counties will be the second category of documents reviewed. A third and final category will be comprised of miscellaneous documents that may include items such as memos, needs assessments, and county reports.

Key Informant Interviews

The individuals participating in key informant interviews are perhaps the most important source of information for the study. For this phase of the evaluation, commencing in July 2007, four groups will be targeted: CDSS program and fiscal staff, county child welfare administrators and staff, county probation administrators and staff, and executive directors from contracted non-profit service providers. Questions to be used in the Planning Phase interviews are in Appendix A. Interviews will be conducted with the key county administrators on the program and the fiscal side of CDSS (approximately 8-10 interviews), organized by CDSS staff. Key child welfare and probation administrators from the Participating Counties will also be interviewed (approximately 8-10 interviews in each Participating County taking place in July 2007). Interviews arranged by evaluation staff will also be conducted with approximately 3 to 4 executive directors from contracted service providers in each of the Participating Counties.

2.1.2 Implementation Phase

2.1.2.1 Key Questions

The key questions for the Implementation Phase portion of the Process Study are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: Implementation Phase Key Questions

What elements of the CAP were implemented as planned and what required modification?
What were the structures for the oversight and monitoring of the CAP implementation?
What were the challenges and facilitators to the CAP implementation?
What staff, staff changes and/or training were necessary for the implementation of the CAP?
What was the frontline staff/supervisor perception of the CAP?
What was the impact of the CAP implementation on the morale of child welfare and probation departments?
What was the impact on the structures of the county departments (child welfare and probation) and the State resulting from the implementation of the CAP?
What was the role of leadership in the implementation of CAP?
What was the role of the Courts in the implementation of the CAP?
What were the key contextual factors influencing the implementation of the CAP?

2.1.2.2 Data Sources and Data Collection Procedures

The data sources for this phase of the Process Study are similar to those described in the previous section. These include meetings, documents, and individuals participating in the process. Data collection procedures include participation/observation, document reviews, and interviews and focus groups.

Workgroup Meeting Participation and Observation

It is likely that the several workgroups established by CDSS and counties in the planning phase will continue during the implementation phase. Again, to the extent possible, the evaluator will attend and participate in the workgroup meetings, primarily the evaluation and the fiscal work groups. Information collected as part of this participation and observation process will be included in the analysis of this phase of the CAP.

Document Review

A variety of documents will be reviewed for this phase of the evaluation, including minutes/notes from relevant meetings in Alameda County and Los Angeles County as well as at CDSS. Organizational charts, memos/letters, and reports will also be examined.

Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews

Again, the individuals participating in focus groups and key informant interviews are perhaps the most important source of information for the study. For this phase of the evaluation beginning

with site visits in early 2008, five groups will be targeted: CDSS program and fiscal staff, county child welfare administrators and staff, county probation administrators and staff, representatives from the courts, and executive directors from contracted non-profit service providers. Interviews will be conducted with the key county administrators on the program and the fiscal side of CDSS and the county departments of child welfare and probation. Interviews will also be conducted with a number of executive directors from contracted service providers. Focus groups will be conducted with county child welfare and probation staff.

Survey

A survey will be conducted to collect information regarding frontline staff/supervisor perspectives on the CAP. The survey contains a limited number of items in order to increase the likelihood of completion (see Appendix B). The survey focuses on staff’s understanding of the CAP, their attitudes toward the CAP, and the impact the CAP has on their work with children and families. Both Alameda County and Los Angeles County have the ability to make the survey available to all child welfare workers and supervisors via their internal computer networks. There are approximately 330 child welfare workers and child welfare supervisors in Alameda County. There are approximately 2600 child welfare workers and child welfare supervisors in Los Angeles County. The anticipated response rate in both counties is between 10% and 20%. The survey will be conducted annually over the course of the CAP; the first administration will be in February 2008 and last administration will be in February 2012.

2.2 County Services Component

The County Services Component portion of the process evaluation is concerned with the service delivery system within each county and how those systems change (or not) as a result of the CAP. As such, comparisons will be made between the pre-CAP service delivery system and the post-CAP service delivery system.

2.2.1 Key Questions

The evaluation question guiding this portion of the process study asks: What is the impact of a capped, flexible Title IV-E funding strategy on the implementation and operations of the Child Welfare Services System and relevant Probation System in participating counties? A number of specific questions emerge from this general question and they are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: County Services Component Key Questions

How did the process for accessing services change as a result of the CAP?
How did the process of case management change as a result of the CAP?
How did the service array change as a result of the CAP?
How did the availability and the intensity of services change as a result of the CAP?
How did service integration change as a result of the CAP?
How did the processes for quality assurance change as a result of the CAP?

2.2.2 Data Sources and Data Collection Procedures

The data sources for this phase of the Process Study are similar to those described in the previous section. These include meetings, documents, and individuals participating in the process. Data collection procedures include participation/observation, document reviews, and interviews and focus groups.

Document Review

A variety of documents will be reviewed for this phase of the evaluation. These will include minutes/notes from relevant meetings in Alameda County and Los Angeles County as well as at CDSS; organizational charts; memos/letters; county Self-Assessments conducted as part of the Child and Family Services Review; and county-produced reports. Relevant reports produced by external organizations will also be examined.

County Management Information Systems

Alameda County and Los Angeles County currently operate management information systems to monitor a variety of service delivery related activities. To the extent possible, the evaluation will make use of those systems as well as any other systems that are developed in response to the CAP.

Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews

Again, the individuals participating in focus groups and key informant interviews are perhaps the most important source of information for the study. For this phase of the evaluation, five groups will be targeted: CDSS program and fiscal staff, county child welfare administrators and staff, county probation administrators and staff, representatives from the courts, and executive directors from contracted non-profit service providers. Interviews will be conducted with the key county administrators on the program and the fiscal side of CDSS and the county departments of child welfare and probation. Interviews will also be conducted with a number of executive directors from contracted service providers. Focus groups will be conducted with county child welfare and probation staff.

Focus groups will commence in July 2007 with child welfare and probation staff (worker-, supervisor-, and manager-level). The focus group topic areas are in Appendix C. The emphasis of the focus groups conducted in July 2007 will be to establish “county services” at the time of the onset of the CAP. In Los Angeles County, there will be two focus groups of child welfare workers and child welfare supervisors with approximately 8-10 individuals in each focus group. There will be one focus group of managers with the same number of individuals. Los Angeles County Probation will have a single focus group (approximately 8-10 individuals) for each level of staff. Alameda County will follow the same pattern of focus groups and number of participating individuals.

2.3 Analysis

The analysis of the Implementation Component will be primarily qualitatively descriptive, identifying key themes and lessons learned. The analysis of the County Services Component will also be primarily qualitatively descriptive with comparisons made between pre-CAP and post-CAP activities.

Section 3: Fiscal Study

A fiscal study is the second evaluation component required by the federal Waiver Terms and Conditions agreement between CDSS and the Children’s Bureau. This section describes the key questions, data sources, sampling and data collection procedures, and analysis of fiscal activities related to the CAP.

3.1 Key Questions

The evaluation question guiding the fiscal study asks: What is the impact of a capped, flexible Title IV-E funding strategy on Child Welfare Services and relevant Probation expenditures in participating counties? A number of specific questions emerge from this general question and from the strategies outlined by Alameda County and Los Angeles County in their Five-Year Plans. First, will the counties reduce their foster care assistance payments from levels preceding the implementation of the CAP? Second, will the counties reduce their foster care administration costs from levels preceding the implementation of the CAP? Finally, will the counties shift their expenditures from foster care services to non-foster care services after the start of the CAP. These three key questions are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Fiscal Study Key Questions and Indicators

Question 1: Did the counties reduce their foster care assistance payments from levels preceding the implementation of the CAP?
Indicator 1.1: Gross foster care assistance payments
Indicator 1.2: Two components of foster care assistance payments
1.2.1: Total number of placement days purchased
1.2.2: Average assistance cost of placement days
Question 2: Did the counties reduce their foster care administration costs from levels preceding the implementation of the CAP?
Indicator 2.1: Gross foster care administrative payments
Indicator 2.2: Average administrative cost of placement days
Question 3: Did the counties shift their expenditures from foster care services to non-foster care services after the start of the CAP?
Indicator 3.1: What was the amount of revenue available for flexible spending?
Indicator 3.2: Flexible spending analysis
3.2.1: Non-foster care spending amount
3.2.2: Available flexible spending amount
3.2.3: Remaining flexible spending amount
3.2.4: Non-foster care spending financed by other revenue
3.2.5: Ratio of foster care services expenditures to non-foster care expenditures

3.2 Data Sources

Multiple data sources will be used for the fiscal study, including budget and expenditure information from CDSS and from the individual counties. Data are aggregated to the county

level (i.e., not at the case- or child-level). Baseline information will be collected from the current claiming and cost-tracking structures in each location. Both counties in their Five-Year Plans discussed the development of new cost-tracking systems or the augmentation of current systems. CDSS is currently developing a fiscal database to be used for claiming by the State and counties during the CAP. Quantitative fiscal data will be augmented by interviews with key informants such as finance directors and budget analysts. Those discussions will also assist in the interpretation of State and county information.

3.3 Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

Fiscal data will come from both State and county sources and include only existing data sources, or sources developed by the State and counties. No additional reporting or tracking requirements will be instituted solely for the purpose of the CAP evaluation. Key informants will be selected based on their knowledge of the fiscal activities related to the CAP.

3.4 Analysis

As previously stated, the purpose of the fiscal study is to assess the relationship between the CAP and changes in child welfare and probation expenditures over the five-year span of the demonstration CAP. In order to explore this relationship, comparisons on fiscal indicators will be made between a baseline period (a four-year period before the onset of the CAP) and the five-year period of the CAP. The indicators used in the analyses are presented in Table 4. They include foster care assistance and administrative expenditures, the total number of purchased placement days, the average cost of placement days, the amount of revenue available for flexible spending, and how that revenue was spent. Given the small sample size and the types of comparisons being made, non-parametric statistical tests will be used in the appropriate circumstances.

The evaluation team will remain open to the potential for fiscal sub-analyses. Potential sub-analyses may be specific to either of the counties.

Section 4: Outcome Study

An outcome study is the third evaluation component required by the federal Waiver Terms and Conditions agreement between CDSS and the Children’s Bureau. This section describes the key questions, data sources, sampling and data collection procedures, and analysis of child welfare outcomes.

4.1 Key Questions

The specific evaluation question of the outcome study asks: What is the impact of a capped, flexible Title IV-E funding strategy on outcomes for children and families in the Child Welfare Services System and relevant Probation System in participating counties, as compared to outcomes prior to the implementation of the CAP? In particular, the outcome evaluation will measure longitudinal changes in the following outcomes:

- child safety,
- exits to permanency,
- placement stability,
- appropriateness and restrictiveness of new and existing out-of-home placements, and
- child and family well-being.

In addition, county participation rates will also be tracked.

The key indicators are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Outcome Study Key Outcomes and Indicators

Child Safety
▪ Number and proportion of children with subsequent substantiated report of abuse/neglect within a specified time period.
▪ Number and proportion of children in foster care with a substantiated report of abuse or neglect while in foster care.
▪ Number and proportion of children that receive a face-to-face contact with a child welfare professional within a specified period following a report of abuse or neglect.
▪ Average Number of social worker visits, as appropriate, per child in placement or with an active child welfare case.
▪ Rate of recurrence of abuse/neglect in homes where children were not removed.
Exits to Permanency
▪ Number and proportion of children that are reunified within 12 months of removal from the home.
▪ Number and proportion of children that are adopted within 24 months of removal from the home.
▪ Number and proportion of children who re-enter out-of-home placement.
Placement Stability
▪ For children in out-of-home placement, the average number of changes in placement setting within 12 months of removal from the home.
Appropriateness and Restrictiveness of New and Existing Out-of-Home Placements
▪ Number and proportion of children placed in foster care with all or some of their siblings.
▪ Number and proportion of children in out-of-home placement who change placement

settings, and the direction of change in the restrictiveness of the placement setting (i.e., to a less restrictive or more restrictive setting).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and proportion of Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) eligible children placed in culturally appropriate foster care settings as defined by ICWA.
Child and Family Well-Being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children transitioning to self sufficient adulthood such as: high school diploma, enrolled in college/higher education, completed vocational training, employed or other means of support.
Participation Rates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and rate of children with referrals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and rate of children with substantiated referrals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and rate of first entries.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and rate of children in care.

The evaluation will also try to include outcomes that are related to the counties CAP-initiated child maltreatment prevention efforts, outcomes related to the investigation and substantiation pathways that are subsequent to a referral (e.g., proportion of referrals investigated), and outcomes related to exits from foster care (e.g., running away from foster care, moving from foster care to probation). Specific outcomes, data sources, and data collection procedures are still being developed.

4.2 Data Sources

The primary data sources for the outcome study are the summary tables prepared for the California-Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR) system under AB 636. The publicly available reports are created by the Performance Indicators Project located at the Child Welfare Research Center, the Center for Social Services Research, at the University of California at Berkeley, and by CDSS. The report preparation conducted by the Performance Indicators Project and CDSS is wholly separate from the CAP evaluation. The case-level source data are drawn from the State’s automated case management data system (CWS/CMS) and aggregated to the county level. Generally, summary tables are then made available on a quarterly basis (calendar year) at the following website: <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/Ccfsr.asp>.

As the C-CFSR/AB 636 data are tied to the federal CFSR process, the C-CFSR/AB 636 indicators serving as the data source for the CAP outcome study indicators will be changing. The CAP outcome study indicators will also change to match the source data. However, there should not be a gap in the longitudinal nature of any new indicator provided the underlying information necessary for the generation of the indicator has been entered into CWS/CMS over time. The CAP evaluation staff will work with the Performance Indicators staff over the course of the study to address data issues that may arise.

The evaluation staff will work with county probation staff to establish probation data sources and collect the data necessary to approximate the outcomes previously described. Those conversations are underway. It is anticipated that current probation data tracking structures will need to be augmented in both of the Participating Counties. In addition, the evaluation staff will use information from the Probation Placement Monthly Caseload Statistical Report (Appendix

D) collected by CDSS. The report includes the categories of caseload, monthly contacts, case plan, and well-being.

4.3 Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

The summary data will be accessed at the Performance Indicators website and updated as it becomes available. The trend-line that will constitute the study's baseline will include data from the onset of C-CFSR quarterly reporting in January 2004 through June 30, 2007, just prior to the onset of the CAP on July 1, 2007. The CAP comparison trend-line will include data from the onset of the CAP through a yet-to-be determined termination date that allows time for the completion of the evaluation deliverables.

4.4 Analysis

As previously stated, the purpose of the outcome study is to assess the impact of the CAP on child welfare and probation outcomes over the five-year span of the demonstration project, as compared to outcomes prior to the implementation of the CAP. In order to explore this possible relationship, comparisons on outcome indicators will be made between the baseline period and the five-year period of the CAP. The indicators used in the analyses are presented in Table 5. The most rigorous statistical methods will be used within a given context. Most importantly, the outcomes will be viewed as existing within an interrelated cycle of measures and analyzed over time, by age, by gender, and by ethnicity, as well as in relationship to the findings from the process and fiscal components of the evaluation.

The evaluation team will remain open to the potential for sub-analyses. Potential sub-analyses may be specific to only one of the counties.

References

- Campbell, D. T., & Stanley J. C. (1963). *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Rossi, P. H., Lipsey, M. W., & Freeman, H. E. (2004). *Evaluation: A Systemic Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Appendix A

Process Study: Planning Phase Questions

1. *Planning Process*

- 1.1 What has been the organizational structure used for the planning process?
- 1.2 Planning Group
 - 1.2.a Who makes up your planning group?
 - 1.2.b How was membership selected for your planning group?
 - 1.2.c Did the planning group exist prior to planning for the CAP?
 - 1.2.d What was the mission of the planning group?
 - 1.2.e How does the planning group function (i.e., process of decision-making)?
 - 1.2.f Who does the planning group report to?
 - 1.2.g Is the planning group involved in planning for other initiatives in your county?
 - 1.2.h Have there been any changes in the membership of the planning group since planning began for the CAP?
 - 1.2.i What has been the role of the Court in the planning process?
 - 1.2.j What has been the role of related agencies (e.g., mental health, education) in the planning process?
- 1.3 Planning Status
 - 1.3.a Where are you in the planning process?
 - 1.3.b When did the planning for the CAP begin?
 - 1.3.c How often do you meet to plan for the CAP?
 - 1.3.d How many meetings have been held to date?
- 1.4 Planned Interventions/Service Activities
 - 1.4.a How did you select the various interventions/activities outlined in the CAP plan?

- 1.4.b How did you select the various target populations outlined in the CAP plan?
- 1.5 Planning Process Facilitators and Barriers
 - 1.5.a What facilitators to the planning process have been encountered?
 - 1.5.b What barriers to the planning process have been encountered?
 - 1.5.c How have those barriers to the planning process been overcome?
 - 1.5.d Has the planning process been successful?
- 2. *Implementation Requirements*
 - 2.1 What do you see as the necessary implementation requirements for the CAP?
 - 2.2 Education and Training
 - 2.2.a What has been the process for educating county staff on the CAP?
 - 2.2.b What has been the process for educating outside organizations on the CAP?
 - 2.2.c Has any new training been necessary (program and/or administration/finance)?
 - 2.3 Staffing Structure
 - 2.3.a (Program) Do you anticipate that there will be staffing changes required (i.e., new staff and/or restructuring)?
 - 2.3.b (Administration/Finance) Do you anticipate that there will be staffing changes required (i.e., new staff and/or restructuring)?
 - 2.4 Oversight and Monitoring
 - 2.4.a How do you plan to supervise and monitor your CAP implementation?
 - 2.4.b Will this differ from how you have supervised previous programs?
 - 2.4.c What staff will you use to supervise the CAP implementation?
 - 2.5 Problem Resolution
 - 2.5.a Do you think the plans for this project are realistic and/or practical?
 - 2.5.b Have you encountered (or anticipate)any problems during the planning phase of the CAP?

- 2.5.c How did you (or plan) to solve those issues?
- 2.5.d Have you developed a mechanism for inter-organizational problem resolution?
- 2.6 Attitudes
 - 2.6.a What are the attitudes of the program staff towards the CAP?
 - 2.6.b What are the attitudes of the administration/finance staff towards the CAP?
- 2.7 Leadership
 - 2.7.a What kind of leadership will be necessary for a successful implementation of the CAP?
 - 2.7.b What will be the necessary source(s) of leadership for a successful implementation of the CAP?
- 2.8 Are there any additional implementation requirements not previously mentioned?
- 3. *Expected Impacts*
 - 3.1 What are the expected impacts of the CAP implementation on the organization?
 - 3.2 Are there concerns about the long-term viability of operating in a capped allocation environment?
- 4. *Contextual Factors*
 - 4.1 Are there any political issues that might impact your ability to implement the CAP?
 - 4.2 Are there any mandated requirements that might impact your ability to implement the CAP?
 - 4.3 How does your agency's relationship with CDSS potentially influence your implementation of the CAP?
 - 4.4 How does your agency's relationship with your Board of Supervisors potentially influence your implementation of the CAP?
 - 4.5 How does your agency's relationship with your Courts potentially influence your implementation of the CAP?
 - 4.6 Are there any other political forces that might have an impact on your ability to implement the CAP, such as organized labor, the media, or advocacy groups?

- 4.7 Are there any unique demographic factors (e.g., language needs, etc.) of your client population that might impact your ability to implement the CAP?
- 4.8 Are there any social/economic factors in your county that might impact your implementation of the CAP?

Appendix B

Process Study: Child Welfare Worker/Supervisor Survey

Thank you for participating in this brief survey. The following questions concern the Capped Allocation Project (CAP) taking place in your county and the responses to the survey will be included in the evaluation of the CAP. Your responses are confidential.

Please select the one best response for each question.

1. Are you a
 - Child Welfare Worker
 - Child Welfare Supervisor

2. Which of the following categories best represents the majority of your day-to-day work?
 - Emergency Response
 - Family Maintenance
 - Family Reunification
 - Permanency Placement
 - Other

3. How would you rate your knowledge of the CAP that is taking place in your county?
 - 1 No knowledge of the CAP
 - 2 Limited knowledge of the CAP
 - 3 Some knowledge of the CAP
 - 4 Knowledgeable of the CAP
 - 5 Very knowledgeable of the CAP

4. How would you rate the CAP's overall influence on your day-to-day work with children and families?
 - 0 Not able to determine
 - 1 No influence on day-to-day work
 - 2 Limited influence on day-to-day work
 - 3 Some influence on day-to-day work
 - 4 Regular influence on day-to-day work
 - 5 A lot of influence on day-to-day work

5. Do you feel the CAP is having a positive effect on the child welfare environment in your county?

- Not able to determine
- Yes
- No

6. Do you feel a wider array of services for your clients have become available within the last six months?

- Not able to determine
- Yes
- No

Thank you for participating!

Appendix C

Process Study: Initial Focus Group Discussion Topic Areas

CWW=Child Welfare Worker (Probation Officer)
CWS=Child Welfare Supervisor (Supervising Probation Officer)
Mgmt=Child Welfare Program Managers (Probation Directors)

1. Internal Case Management
 - a. Screening (CWS)
 - b. Intake/Investigation Function (CWS)
 - c. Unit Structure (CWS/Mgmt)
2. Court Involvement
 - a. Referrals (CWS/Mgmt)
 - b. Dumping (CWS/Mgmt)
3. Service Array
 - a. Sufficiency (CWW/CWS)
 - b. Service Gaps (CWW/CWS)
 - c. New Service Plans (CWW/CWS)
4. Targeting
 - a. Special Initiatives (CWW/CWS)
 - b. Special Populations (CWW/CWS)
5. Services and Finance Methods
 - a. Contracts vs. Direct Provision (CWS/Mgmt)
 - b. Performance-Based Contracting (CWS/Mgmt)
 - c. Rates (CWS/Mgmt)
6. Utilization Review
 - a. Monitoring Out-of-Home Placements (CWS/Mgmt)
 - b. Formal Limits (CWS/Mgmt)
7. Quality Assurance
 - a. Quality Control (CWS/Mgmt)
 - b. Quality Enhancement (CWW/CWS/Mgmt)
 - c. Quality Assurance Structure (Mgmt)
8. Expenditures
 - a. Budget Process and Decision-Making (Mgmt)
 - b. Flexible Funds (CWW)
9. Revenue
 - a. Non-Categorical Funding (Mgmt)

- b. Medicaid/MediCal (CWS/Mgmt)
- 10. Morale
 - a. Worker Morale (CWW)
 - b. Supervisor Morale (CWS)
- 11. Leadership
 - a. Role of Leadership (CWW/CWS/Mgmt)
- 12. Interagency Collaboration
 - a. General Status (CWS/Mgmt)
 - b. Mental Health (CWS/Mgmt)
 - c. Juvenile Court (CWS/Mgmt)
- 13. Community Well-Being
 - a. Status (CWW/CWS/Mgmt)
 - b. Influences (CWW/CWS/Mgmt)

Appendix D

Probation Placement Monthly Caseload Statistical Report
(FC23 Draft – Pilot 2006 version dated 7.19.06)