

KEEPING LINKED

A Publication of CFPIC's Federal Linkages Project

LINKAGES - CalWORKs and Child Welfare Collaboration to Improve Outcomes

May 2011

If We Knew Then...

It's time for reflection as we move towards the end of the Federal Demonstration Grant. This is what we did on behalf of the Children's Bureau for the Family Connection Grantees at their Federal meeting in Washington last month. The Family Connection Grantees are half-way through their grant period and we were invited to address recommendations for mid-course adjustments based on our experiences over the past four and one-half years. We decided to present on what we have learned about implementation specifically related to Linkages and more generally how implementation science supports what we have learned and how it can be used to support future implementation. (See separate article in this issue)

To begin with, we have always known that visionary Leadership is a major key to implementing any new practice. The Leadership has to be visible and must be a champion for the change. This is especially true of the Linkages initiative since it crosses over two major social services programs with two different Directors with what appears to be two different missions: child safety for those in Child Welfare and work participation for those in TANF. Without the visionary leadership that defines its mission more broadly and develops a strong shared vision, this initiative will not move forward. At the statewide project level we believe that we might have done more to keep county Leadership engaged in Linkages and as visible Champions for the project itself. During the past few years, we had several counties drop out of the initiative because of State budget impacts. However, from our perspective, we see Linkages as one of those practices that should be embraced especially in budget down- turns since Linkages is about being more efficient and more effective through the sharing of limited resources.

Our next major challenge was (and is) data. At the county level, it is necessary to commit staff time and resources to evaluation. There needs to be the willingness to collect data, analyze it, and then share it with staff so they can understand what is working or what is not working; we believe that this is the most effective way of engaging staff and motivating them to engage in this collaborative practice. The Project might have been more assertive in this area, dedicating more time for the statewide project evaluation staff to work more closely with county staff as well as devoting more time to understanding the intricacies of the various data systems. In spite of our efforts and the development of Data Peer Clusters to assist counties, there are still many counties in the Project that have not obtained useful Outcome Data.

And finally it has been challenging to simply understand that this type of change in practice-- working in a coordinated way-- takes a long time and requires long-term commitment at both the State and Local level to ensure that this practice is embedded into the way we work with families.

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Potential Harm to Families



The County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) Self-Sufficiency Committee expressed concerns about the potential harm to families resulting in the changes that SB 72 makes to the CalWORKs Program. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) issued several ACL's in April providing instructions to counties for implementing the changes to CalWORKs program. These can be found on the CDSS website at www.cdss.ca.gov and we have also posted them on the Linkages Intranet. The concern many people have is what might happen to these vulnerable populations as a result of the changes, which are as follows:

- 8% maximum aid payment reduction (ACL 11-29)
- Changes to the earned income disregard (ACL 11-29)
- A new 48-month time limit for aided adults
- Additional grant reductions for certain child-only cases
- Changes to mental health and substance abuse funding (ACL 11-34)
- Changes to the AB 98 (Chapter 5, Statutes of 2007) subsidized employment program (ACL 11-32)
- The extension of the CalWORKs Short-Term exemptions for cases with young children and cases with good cause for lack of supportive services (ACL 11-34)
- Suspension of the Cal-Learn program (ACL 11-36)

One county has identified some of the areas of potential harm to families and has developed possible data sources, as follows: (the matrix will be posted on the Linkages Intranet)

- Increase in homelessness
- Increase in incidents of domestic violence
- Increased need for mental health services
- Increased food insecurity
- Increase in child abuse and/or neglect and foster care placement

As we continue to work on ways to Coordinate our efforts when working with mutual populations being served by CalWORKs and Child Welfare, it is important to look at those families that would have received services in CalWORKs but no longer are eligible due to changes in CalWORKs.

Linkages Monterey Convening: Celebrating a Decade of Partnership

Register NOW!

The Monterey Convening Registration was sent via email to Linkages counties' Coordinators at the end of March.

A few things to remember:

- We want only one Registration per Linkages County Team
- For counties with more than one Coordinator, please decide internally who will do the organizing of the registrations
- Before registering, have email addresses, workshop choices, and vegetarian or non-vegetarian choices
- The Registration is an on-line form so you may want to download the Program Brochure for circulation amongst the team so they can decide which workshops to attend
- Have your Team attend different Workshops to get the most out of the convening
- Invite your Leadership to attend this final convening and make sure they know about the Leadership Session sponsored by National Staff Development and Training Association
- The only cost to Linkages counties will be a small charge if someone does decide to attend the Leadership Session Workshop—otherwise it is free
- Reserve your rooms at the Hyatt as soon as possible since we are opening this convening to non-Linkages counties and states and others who may want to attend the Leadership Session only. We will transfer the hotel costs to our Linkages master list upon check-out (we cover 7/6 and 7/7)



Our final convening is a celebration of all the work we have been doing to keep Linkages a focus and a priority within our locales to support vulnerable children and families. We hope that you will bring those individuals that have supported your work and will be important to your Linkages

If We Knew Then...

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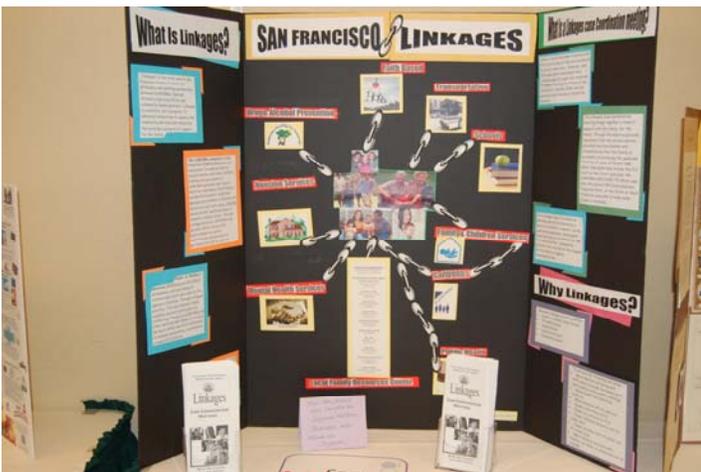
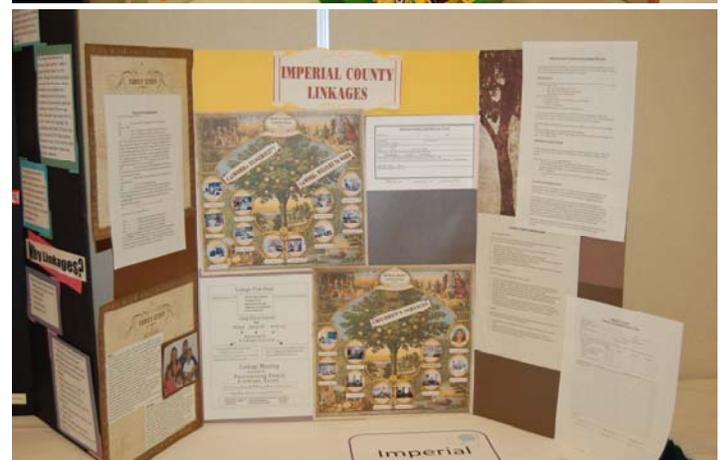
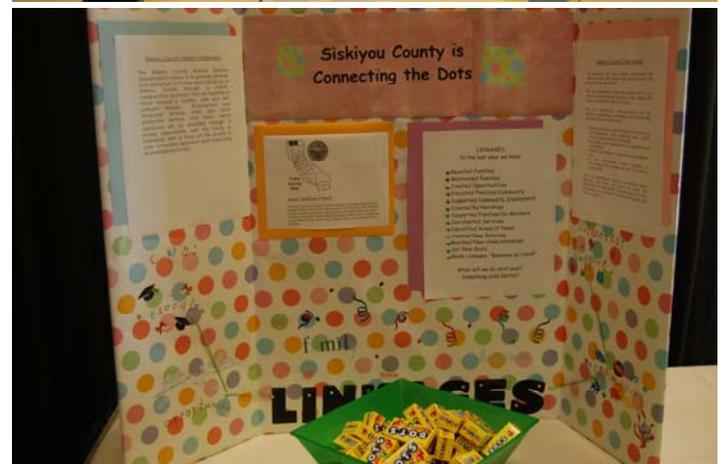
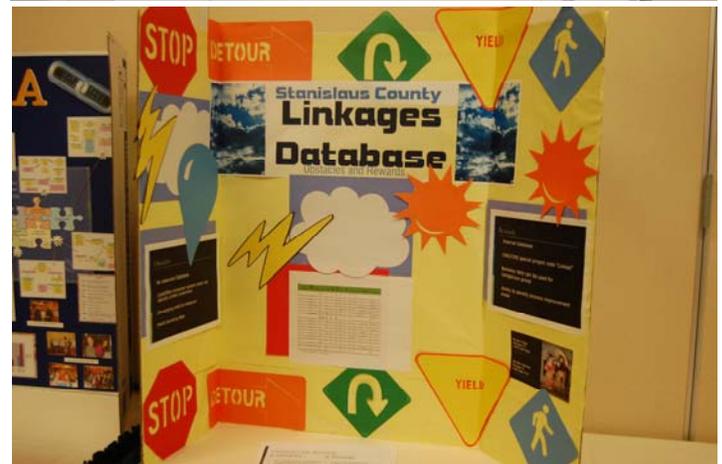
We hope that Linkages Teams at the local level will use these last six months of the Federal Project to reflect on their own Linkages project. You might consider the questions that we asked the Family Connections grantees during our presentation in Washington:

- ▶▶ What had you hoped to accomplish by the end of the Federal Grant?
- ▶▶ On a scale of 1 – 10, how close are you to that goal?
- ▶▶ Who do you need to involve to reach that goal?
- ▶▶ What evidence have you gathered to make your case?

We concluded our presentation by sharing with the grantees some of the tools that we have developed and are in the process of developing to help counties sustain Linkages; the Family Engagement Guidelines, the Communication tools including the Meeting the Linkages Challenge video, and the on-line Toolkit which we plan to demonstrate at the Monterey Convening in July. We hope that you are using these tools to expand and deepen Linkages in your county. And we hope that you will reflect on your own lessons learned and will develop plans to continue Linkages in your county until you are fully implemented.

Story Boards

It's time for you and your Linkages Teams who are coming to the Linkages Convening in Monterey to put your thinking caps on and create your Linkages Story to share during our first evening reception. Your planning committee decided that it has been a wonderful way in the past to find out what other counties are doing and to offer opportunities to "steal shamelessly" from one another. Since each of you will be making presentations at this final convening, you might summarize on a poster board your presentation, but with the addition of graphics. We have had some wonderful Story Boards in the past; since you will remember that your colleagues will be voting on the "best" Story board I know the competitive juices will start flowing. Here are some exhibits from the past.



WHAT WE KNOW NOW (SORT OF): IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE

Stuart Oppenheim, Executive Director, CFPIC

When we were asked to address the Federal Family Connections grantees meeting, we had the opportunity to reflect on some of the theoretical changes that have occurred in our field in the years since we began Linkages. We would like to share those reflections with you as a guide to helping you think about how you might work to institutionalize Linkages in your county.

Since 2004, when our organization (CFPIC) was created, we have witnessed—and participated in—innovations that have come and gone. These have all had various levels of impact and from each - some elements have remained in practice but each as been an “add on” to an overloaded existing system and none have created wide-spread systemic change that can be sustained without external support.

In our field of Human Services there are some assumptions and challenges that guide work. Our first assumption is that Best Practices are those that produce positive client-level outcomes. We also believe that Best Practices can be relatively easily be recreated in different jurisdictions. But we are challenged to understand both how Best Practices produce positive outcomes and to understand what is necessary to translate good ideas from one jurisdiction into effective practices in other places.

There is currently a strong national focus on identifying evidence based practice and a recognition of the need to understand how certain activities produce good outcomes. And there is a belief that once EBP's are identified the battle has been won. But there is not nearly as much focus on how to bring EBP's home. The Monograph, “The Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature” (available at <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~nirn/default.cfm>) makes the following as a case for focusing on the question of implementation:

“Those who set out to change schools and schooling are confronted with two enormous tasks. The first is to develop prototypes. The second involves large scale replication. One without the other is insufficient. Yet considerably more attention is paid to developing and validating prototypes than to delineating and testing scale-up processes. Clearly it is time to correct this deficiency

Taylor, Nelson, and Adelman, pg. 322, Implementation Research Mongraph

The monograph goes on to define implementation as *a specified set of activities designed to put into practice an activity or program of known dimensions*. According to this definition, implementation processes are purposeful and are described in sufficient detail such that independent observers can detect the presence and strength of the ‘specific set of activities and they provide a graphic that identifies specific “implementation drivers” (see illustration on Pg. 6.

These implementation drivers are:

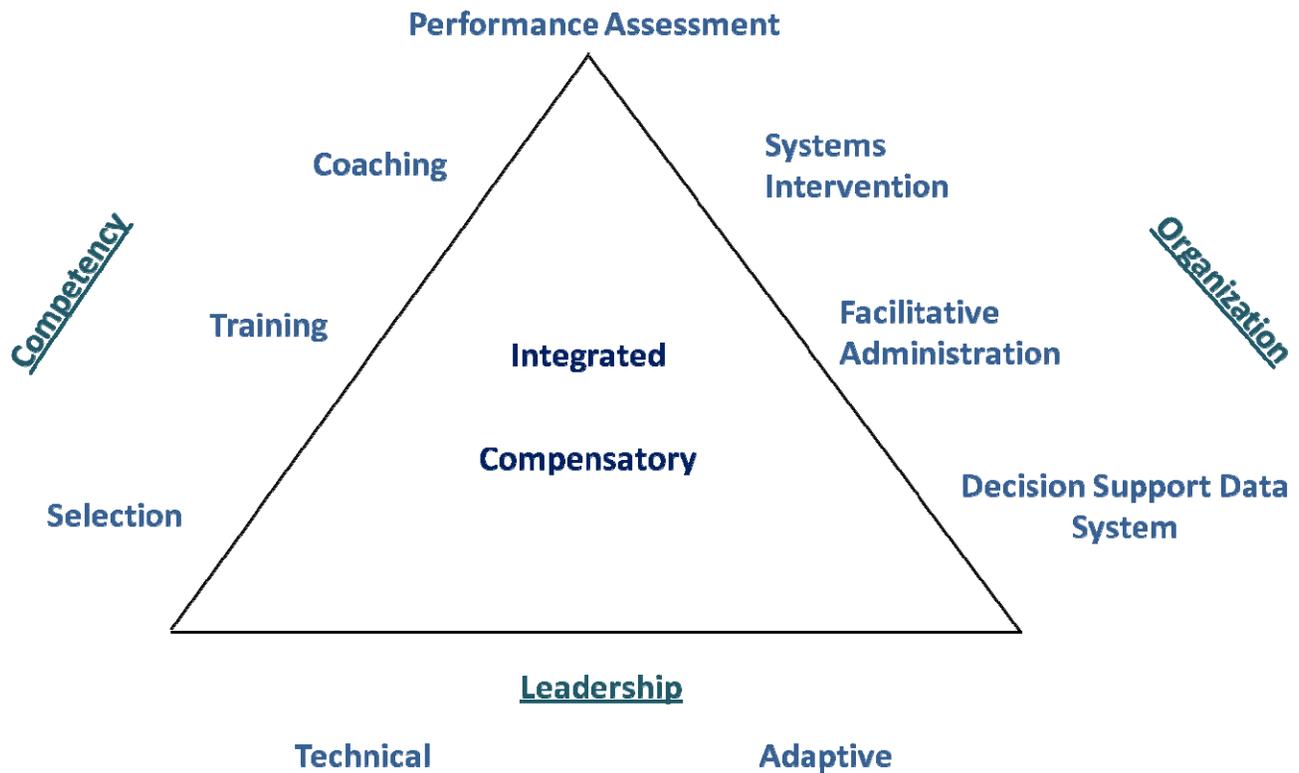
Competency Drivers -- mechanisms that help to develop, improve, and sustain one's ability to implement an intervention with fidelity and benefits to children and families.

Organization Drivers-- mechanisms to create and sustain hospitable organizational and systems environments for effective services.

Leadership Drivers -- methods to manage Technical problems where there is high level of agreement about problems as well as certainty about solutions *and* to constructively deal with Adaptive challenges where problems are not clear and solutions are elusive.

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Implementation Drivers



According to the authors, these drivers should be *integrated and consistent in philosophy, goals, knowledge and skills across these processes and compensatory at the practitioner and program level.*

Some elements of Implementation Infrastructure that should be addressed as we pay attention to the question of implementation are:

- Practice based practitioner selection
- Skill based training
- Practice based coaching
- Practitioner performance evaluation
- Program evaluation
- Facilitative administrative practices
- Methods for systems interventions

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The basic questions that Implementation Science addresses are:

WHAT can be done?

- Clearly described (what “it” is)
- Operationalized (say, do, teachable)
- Performance assessment (presence and strength of “it”)
- Evidence “it” is better than business as usual

HOW will we do it?

- **Build Competency and Confidence**
 - Develop, improve, and sustain competent & confident use of innovations
- **Change Organizations and Systems**
 - Create and sustain hospitable organizational and system environments for effective services
- **Employ Both Technical & Adaptive Leadership**
 - Technical Leadership
 - » Use established norms/ goals
 - » Define problems/Provide solutions
 - » Clarify roles and responsibilities/Assigns tasks
 - » Manage conflict/Maintain order
 - Adaptive Leadership
 - » Make changes that “disturb every element of a system”
 - » Break with the past
 - » Operate outside of existing paradigms
 - » Conflict with prevailing values and norms

WHO will do the work?

Implementation Teams are accountable: **THEY DO THE WORK**

- Partners coming together to clearly define roles in implementing new practice with each partner taking responsibility for their role in supporting implementation drivers
- With implementation team and effective use of implementation science and practice—80% effective in 3 years (Fixsen, Blasé, Timbers, & Wolf, 2001)
- No implementation team and letting it happen rather than making it happen—14% effective in 17 years (Balas & Boren, 2000)

We have come to believe that understanding and applying Implementation Science is critical to our efforts to sustain meaningful change such as Linkages because it offers the only effective way to make a sustained difference for families and children in the Human Services System, it is how agencies can be sure that they will achieve results when they embark on a new initiative and it is clear that spread and sustainability are critical for ensuring that we make meaningful change.

As you look forward in your Linkages process we challenge you to think about the following questions:

- How will you improve on your current partnerships?
- What can you do to address the drivers the implementation triangle?
- What tools might you want to develop to support your sustainability goals?

If you are interested in Implementation Science resources that offer a complete picture of how these principles can guide your continuing Linkages work, we recommend the following: National Implementation Resource Network: <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~nirn/default.cfm>. Implementation Conference (GIC) to be held in Washington, DC August 15-17, 2011- www.implementationconference.org. Contact Dean Fixsen: dean.fixsen@unc.edu.

Updates.....Updates....Updates

The **Linkages Final Convening** is getting close. If you haven't registered your Linkages Team please do so right away. Just a reminder the **cut-off date for the hotel rooms at the Hyatt Regency Monterey is June 10, 2011** and we cannot guarantee rooms or rates beyond that date.

It was just announced that **John Wagner** is leaving the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and will be acting Department Head of the Community Services Department. Director Wagner has been a supporter of Linkages and we will miss his leadership around collaborative programs. However, we are delighted to hear that **Will Lightbourne**, Santa Clara Agency Director will take over the helm of CDSS and we know that he is a supporter of the Linkages project.

If you received a Meeting Doodle from Danna Fabella, please respond to it as soon as possible. She is coordinating conference calls for planning the County Workshop Panels at the Convening in Monterey. If you have questions contact her at Danna.Fabella@cfpic.org or 925-324-5258.

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Child & Family Policy Institute of California

The Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC) is a private non-profit organization incorporated in 2004 as a 501 (c) 3 entity under the auspices of the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA). The purpose of the CFPIC is to “advance the development of sound public policy and promote program excellence in county Human Services Agencies through research, education, training and technical assistance.”

Linkages is a strategic effort by twenty seven California's counties to improve coordination between CalWORKS and Child Welfare through development of county specific work plans and leadership. The initiative is supported by CFPIC through trainings, convenings, peer support and technical assistance. These supports initially received private foundation funding and are currently funded through a Federal Grant and the California Department of Social Services.