



**Alameda Child Development Corps:
Year 1 Qualitative Implementation Study
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**Kyra Caspary
Elizabeth Gilman
Muriel Hamilton**

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Abstract

This report on the implementation of Alameda County's Child Development Corps program provides guidance and lessons for policymakers, program administrators, child-care advocates and others who are planning similar initiatives to improve retention. To conduct the study, PACE (Policy Analysis for California Education) held a series of focus groups to collect responses from program planners, stipend recipients, and other members of the child-care community. Feedback was gathered on aspects of the entire planning and implementation process, such as the key players involved in the program's launch, decisions about who would be eligible for stipend awards, the agency that ran the program, and the appeals process. Results from the first year include an increase in providers applying for child development permits and providers expressing greater commitment to their profession and seeking out training opportunities. But challenges also remain, including concerns about how the child development permit requirements fit family child-care providers and the need for providers to take courses that are more relevant to their careers.

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.Alameda Child Development Corps Year 1 Qualitative Implementation Study Report

Findings from the Year 1 Qualitative Implementation Study of the Alameda Child Development Corps are based on feedback from twelve focus groups attended by program planners, staff, stipend recipients, and other members of the child-care community in Alameda County. This feedback was supplemented by follow-up interviews and background materials, such as program outreach materials and minutes from program meetings. Please see the [appendix](#) for more information about the methodology of the study. Quotations and sentiments are individual reactions to the programs, and may not reflect generally held views; however, PACE has made an effort to highlight perspectives that were expressed in more than one context.

When young children have close and stable relationships with their child-care providers, they are more likely to feel happy and secure while their parents are working, according to researchers who study child-care quality. Frequent turnover of providers, however, can leave children feeling anxious and withdrawn and can pull down the quality of the environment.

The authors of a 1999 report from the Center for the Child Care Workforce wrote, “Turnover is demoralizing. It can turn a child care teacher’s or director’s job into a question of day-to-day survival, rather than a way of working toward high-quality care for children and families.”

The 1993 “Cost, Quality and Outcomes” report, conducted by researchers at four universities, found an annual staff turnover rate of 37 percent. And a study conducted among 75 centers in northern California found that 76 percent of all of the staff members who worked in these centers in 1996 no longer worked there four years later.

While there may be a variety of reasons why child-care providers leave their jobs, low pay is certainly high on the list. In 1999, the average wage for a child-care worker, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, was \$7.42 per hour. Those who define themselves as preschool teachers made about \$9.50 per hour, but that’s still less than half of what kindergarten teachers earn.

As a result, efforts to retain teachers by boosting their income, as well as encourage additional training and professional development, particularly for entry-level teachers, are becoming an important strategy in the drive to improve the quality of child care.

In 1999, both Alameda and San Francisco counties launched child-care retention incentive programs. These initiatives are designed to reduce turnover and retain educated early care and education providers by providing monetary stipends to providers who meet certain tenure and education requirements. Because of the pioneering nature of the programs, the California Children and Families Commission funded Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) to evaluate these two counties’ initiatives. The PACE evaluation consists of both an outcome component focusing on program effects measured in terms of retention and professional development, and a qualitative study that examines how the programs have been implemented.

This document, the Alameda Child Development Corps Year 1 Qualitative Study Report, is a synthesis of the findings from the Year 1 implementation study of the Alameda Child Development Corps. It is intended to summarize Alameda County's experience and to serve as a resource for policy-makers and program managers seeking to implement programs that address the problem of high turnover in the child-care workforce.

This report is divided into four sections: county context, program history and planning, program structure and implementation, and perceptions of program effect.

- I. **County context** provides an overview of the child-care field in the county, including demand and supply for child care, the child-care workforce and the early care and education training system. This section describes the problems in the child-care field at the time the initiative was being planned, as perceived by focus group participants.
- II. **Program history and planning** describes the advocacy process that led to the funding of the program. This section outlines the basic elements of the Alameda Child Development Corps, and describes the process of program design. *Includes lessons learned.*
- III. **Program structure and implementation** describes the implementation of the various components of the Alameda Child Development Corps, including home agency, staffing, recruitment and outreach, the application process, eligibility determination, stipend awards, appeals, and advisory group. *Includes lessons learned.*
- IV. **Perceptions of program effects** summarizes the changes that focus group participants have observed in the field, including increased recognition, professional networks, training and professional development, retention, and quality of care. *Includes lessons learned.*

History of the California CARES Initiative

Several child-care groups have advocated for higher wages over the past two decades, both in California and nationwide. In 1996, the California Department of Education contracted with the American Institutes for Research and the Center for the Child Care Workforce to complete a review of wages and benefits among child-care and preschool teachers and staff, revealing low pay for most, even among teaching staffs that displayed relatively strong education levels.

Aiming to coordinate a response to these new data on wages, in 1997, child-care leaders from around the state were pulled together by the San Francisco Early Childhood Professional Development Institute (PDI). This group of activists settled on a policy strategy that came to be known as CARES (Compensation and Retention Encourage Stability).^{*} Originally developed by the Center for the Childcare Workforce, CARES supplements annual salaries through wage supplements or stipends.

Subsequently, a number of counties designed programs based on this model, fusing wage supplements to well-organized professional development activities that encouraged teachers and staff to move up the state's child development credentialing ladder. The child-care community in Alameda County developed a strategy with rigorous continuing education requirements tied to significant wage supplements, while San Francisco's model provided similar stipend levels with fewer continuing requirements. But at its inception, the CARES model stemmed from earlier "living wage" and economic justice movements.

The first bill to support CARES retention incentives was introduced in 1998 by Dion Aroner, a state legislator from the Berkeley-Oakland area. While waiting for State funds, advocates in Alameda County and San Francisco convinced local political leaders to allocate funding for CARES incentives. In San Francisco, the city leaders designated one and a half million dollars from the county's general fund to establish the first retention-incentive initiative in the State. The Alameda County program secured funding soon thereafter, aided by new tobacco tax revenues flowing to California counties under state Proposition 10 that provided over \$700 million annually for early childhood programs beginning in 1999.

Over the next two years, the California Children and Families Commission (under Proposition 10) and Governor Gray Davis had agreed to fund efforts in over 42 California counties to experiment with wage incentives, variably coupled with continuing training requirements. The State Commission also is supporting evaluations of the original Alameda and San Francisco programs, and the new initiatives getting underway throughout California.

^{*} Burton, Alice; Jessica Mihaly; Jennifer Kagiwada; and Marcy Whitebook. *The CARES Initiative in California: Pursuing Public Policy to Build a Skilled and Stable Child Care Workforce, 1997-2000*. Center for the Child Care Workforce, 2000.

COUNTY CONTEXT

Child-Care Landscape

Situated across the bay from San Francisco, Alameda County shares several of the child-care challenges faced by its better-known neighbor: a high cost of living, low income levels for child-care staff, high turnover, and a struggle to attract and retain an adequate supply of qualified child-care teachers. Measuring 736 square miles, Alameda has a total population of 1,443,741 people (U.S. Census 2000) making it the seventh most populous California county. In 1999, Alameda taxpayers reported the seventh highest median income in the state compared to other California counties, at \$34,588.¹ This prosperity was also reflected in the 1999 unemployment rate of 3.5%, the twelfth lowest in the state.² The county had the 43rd highest rate of child poverty of the 58 counties in the state. Based on ratio of the number of licensed child-care slots for children ages 0-13 in the county, Alameda ranks tenth out of the 58 California counties in the supply of licensed child care.³ In the late 1990s, the robust Bay Area economy, along with changes in welfare regulations, increased the demand for child care while wages in the child development and early childhood education field remained stagnant, leading many skilled child-care staff to seek higher compensation in other fields. A statewide class size reduction program in elementary schools compounded the problem by enticing early childhood educators with B.A. degrees into higher-paid K-3 classrooms.

Alameda

Population and number children, 2000 U.S Census		
Total Population		1,443,741
Number of Children, ages 0-5		98,378
Number of Children, ages 5-14		201,417
2000 child-care supply information ⁴		
Number of Child Care Centers		574
Number of Licensed Family Child Care Homes		1,977
Licensed Child Care Supply		53,538 total slots
1998 child-care supply information ⁵		
Center slots per 100 children	□ Ages 0-5	18.57
	□ Ages 6-14	7.33
FCC slots per 100 children	□ Ages 0-5	18.4
	□ Ages 6-14	14.62

¹ Franchise Tax Board, http://www.ftb.ca.gov/press/01_17att.htm

² California Employment Development Department, <http://www.calmis.ca.gov/htmlfile/subject/lftable.htm>.

³ The California Child Care Portfolio 2001. California Child Care Resource and Referral Network

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ Child Care Indicators 1998, Part II. PACE and the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network

Child-Care Workforce

Wages and Benefits: *A Profile of the Alameda County Child Care Workforce*⁶, a 1999 study of center-based providers conducted by the Center for the Child Care Workforce, describes the compensation available to child-care professionals in Alameda County.

- Assistant teachers at the low end of the salary scale earned an average of \$12,320 per year
- Lowest-paid teachers averaged \$14,490 annually.
- Senior staff in child-care centers received annual compensation that was virtually unchanged since a previous survey in 1995.
- Salaries for the county’s child-care directors ranged on average from \$23,205 to \$32,323 per year.

In addition to low earnings, many child-care providers in the county also lacked health care benefits. Only 40 percent of centers offered partially-paid health care plans to teaching staff, and less than 10 percent of the county’s child-care centers offered teaching staff fully-paid health coverage. Between 10 and 20 percent (varying by position) were offered no coverage at all.

Turnover and Retention: Child-care center directors were faced with what they termed an extreme staffing crisis, and were unable to find qualified staff to work in programs: “There was . . . a tremendous wave of directors complaining about the fact that they could not get staff. . . it almost hit the whole field at the same time—a panic level occurred.” This impression is supported by an increase in turnover documented in the 1999 *Profile*, which found that:

- Among assistant teachers in the county, annual turnover rose from 25 percent in 1995 to 32 percent in 1998.
- Forty percent of directors reported that for their most recent staff turnover, the search time to find a permanent replacement teacher was five weeks or more.
- Thirty to 40 percent of child-care teachers and assistant teachers had been employed in their centers for less than one year.

Focus group participants perceived attrition from the field as particularly acute for more highly-educated providers, who left the field for benefits and better pay in teaching positions with school districts, or for higher-paying jobs in the private sector. Directors were replacing these staff with less-qualified recruits: “There’s always been bad turnover in child care—but there was this critical change where we started having people be replaced by others with less and less education and experience, less and less skills. Not only was the turnover harmful for the programs and the children, but also the whole level of the quality was adversely affected.” One director noted that by 2000, as the Child Development Corps was being organized, the overall annual turnover rate among child-care staff in the county had increased to 35 percent.⁷

⁶ Center for the Child Care Workforce. *A Profile of the Alameda County Child Care Workforce: Growing Evidence of a Staffing Crisis*. October, 1999.

⁷ Alameda County Children and Families Commission, September 26, 2000.

Training and Education Levels of Providers: Planners also saw a need for increased training and professional standards in the field, noting, “there’s a body of knowledge about working with children that’s necessary to have when taking care of kids all day.” One community college instructor observed that some students were coming into the field of early childhood and to the classroom with little preparation: “Students who were coming in with no skills . . . were pushed into the child-care field because they said they liked children. So that means if you like children, or if you have children [and] are part of . . . the welfare-to-work program, [you] were encouraged to go into early childhood.” She added that the low wages in child care meant that new workers often didn’t stay long: “They come into the field thinking this is something easy, something fun to work with kids . . . they go into a job and get, what, seven dollars an hour, realize that they can’t support themselves on those wages.”

Other Child-Care Initiatives

On a local level, the City of Berkeley Taskforce on Child Care Compensation had been recognizing family providers and teaching staff since 1998 with stipends of up to \$600 for their educational achievement and commitment to the field, but this effort lacked funds to provide substantial financial compensation. One of the county’s Resources & Referral agencies (R&Rs) and the Alameda Child Care Planning Council, along with others, had helped to design this early initiative.

Several quality-enhancement initiatives had been operating within the state, but these addressed the issue of compensation only indirectly and for a select group of teachers. For example, the federal 1990 Child Care and Development Block Grant (subsequently combined with other federal child-care programs into the Child Care and Development Fund) permitted states to allocate some quality improvement funds to increase both compensation and staff development. The Early Childhood Mentor Program, which provides incentives to experienced teachers who help train newer staff, is among the efforts supported by this funding.

Early Care and Education Training System

In Alameda County, four community colleges offer child development training. In addition, a mix of state and federal funds through the Child Care and Development Fund support child-care and staff development programs among centers and networks of family child care homes.

Availability of Courses: Instructors from both private and public training institutions discussed the availability of unit-bearing courses (coursework that offers college credit), noting that there was a need for more courses to be offered in the evenings and on weekends. Colleges are not able to offer courses with a lab or practicum component in the evenings unless they have a children’s center that operates at these times. In addition, students would be upset when courses were canceled because too few people registered for them ahead of time.

Linguistic and Cultural Accessibility: Representatives from local training institutions were concerned about meeting the needs of the large population of recent immigrants with limited English proficiency. One instructor described the need for bilingual trainings. “The majority of trainings really are monolingual, English,” she explained. “And . . . the demographic of providers

is many are recent immigrants...it's a barrier to training that I think everyone's trying to overcome.”

Need for Partnerships: Instructors from local community colleges and private training organizations discussed the need for more partnerships between community colleges and smaller community-based organizations. They thought that smaller agencies are more accessible to immigrants because they are more flexible and accommodating of linguistic and scheduling needs; however, they also lack the funds to offer tailored courses without charging high tuitions. On the other hand, community colleges have access to more resources but are constrained by more bureaucratic processes.

Role of CARES

Though valuable as quality improvement efforts, these programs and initiatives did not focus on rewarding early childhood teachers for their skills while encouraging them to remain in the field and to further their education. In other words, the county lacked funds for a systematic and comprehensive staff retention effort: “there wasn't money, or an organized way of reaching out to all the people to see that they got training.” In contrast, the Child Development Corps initiative was designed to have a wide-ranging effect on the child-care workforce, by rewarding providers for their educational attainments and encouraging continued education and professional development.

PROGRAM HISTORY AND PLANNING

Advocacy and Funding

Support for the Child Development Corps, Alameda County's CARES program, evolved from the county's rich history of advocacy for the child-care workforce and the strength of its community-based organizations. For example, the Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW), then known as the Child Care Employee Project, began in Alameda County in 1978 and later developed the Worthy Wage Campaign to raise awareness about the need for better pay in the child-care field. The City of Berkeley child-care compensation program helped lay the groundwork for a larger, county-wide initiative. CCW also helped to develop the California Early Childhood Mentor Program with Chabot College. By 1999, county advocates were seeking funding for a large-scale retention and capacity-building initiative.

Description of Funding Process

Given the importance of quality and caregiver continuity in child-care environments, Alameda planners and child-care advocates identified the need to take action to preserve, reward and build a skilled child-care workforce. In their view, a solution to the three-pronged problem of high turnover, declining educational levels and low wages required finding a way to link training and professional growth with enhanced compensation. To respond to this need, the Alameda Child Care Planning Council, a state-mandated group composed of child-care directors and teaching staff, family child-care providers, resource and referral agencies, parents, and representatives of community colleges and social service and health agencies, took the lead on outlining a CARES initiative for Alameda County.

With the enactment of the California Children and Families First Act and the availability of funds designated to support young children, members of the Planning Council saw, within the mandate of proposition 10, the chance to make child care "major player." The County Department of Health Care Services offered funds to the county Proposition 10 steering committee in January of 1999, before the county received any money from the State Commission. The steering committee used the \$200,000 to hire staff and consultants and to rent meeting rooms, allowing the planning process to go forward even though state Proposition 10 funds were not available until October 1999.

As part of this planning process, the Planning Council Needs Assessment Committee started meeting with other players interested in getting funding from the County's Children and Families Commission, in particular with the health services community. Some members of the health care community were not initially supportive of including child care in the plan for the local Proposition 10 funds; however, the director of the county's Health Care Services Agency served on the Proposition 10 steering committee and was subsequently appointed to serve on the Alameda Children and Families Commission. Despite his role in the health community, child-care planners thought he was open to seeing the funding support other services as well. With support from leaders at both the Planning Council and Health Services, these meetings led to the inclusion of child care in the Proposition 10 strategic plan (known as Every Child Counts).

Planners also noted that consultants hired for the planning process were successful in finding ways to reconcile the various groups competing for funding to put a plan in motion.

Alameda County was the first in the state to submit its strategic plan to the California Children and Families Commission. Once state funds arrived, the county Children and Families Commission allocated \$3.8 million of its \$6.5 million in Early Care and Education (ECE) funding to the Child Development Corps. There are three other ECE components that support and complement the Corps' activities: quality improvement grants to child care programs; grants and loans for site improvements; and a recruitment, training and coordination effort that includes the community colleges and local agencies.

Climate for Funding: Planners characterized the influence of organized forums like the Planning Council and the Needs Assessment Committee, and the political savvy of its members, as a distinctive element in the county's planning process, noting "it's the organized force that makes Alameda County unique . . . people who have had a political take on the situation for 20 years." The Child Care Planning Council was crucial to building support for the initiative within the child-care community. One planner explained how, "the Planning Council itself solved a lot of the internecine warfare that used to exist amongst all these various powerful child-care groups who operated independently." Over the years, the resource and referral agencies and the Planning Council had contracted with CCW to research local child-care wages, benefits and working conditions and were thus prepared to give an accurate picture of the compensation in the field.

Key Players: In addition, program planners also perceived a more spontaneous show of support for a retention initiative: "It kind of just bubbled up because the need was so great and the opportunity was so great." They described the way members of the child-care community came to public hearings in support of the initiative, which was crucial to developing support for the program among the Alameda Board of Supervisors and the eventual Children and Families Commissioners.

Program Planning

Planning Process: Based on the CARES model drafted by CCW, the Corps evolved into a professional development initiative for child care. Some of the transformation took place at monthly regional CARES meetings convened by CCW, but the Planning Council Needs Assessment Committee worked on most of the early program design. Planners viewed this process as open. The Alameda Child Care Planning Council has 35 voting members, but its meetings are open to all, as were the meetings of the Needs Assessment Committee. People who were on the Planning Council mailing list were informed about the subcommittee meetings, which were also listed in mailings from local R&Rs. At the end of the process, planners felt that they had heard all voices. The Needs Assessment Committee became the Proposition 10 Advisory Committee after the county Children and Families Commission committed money to fund the Corps in December 1999.

Emergence of Goals: During the design period, planners viewed the goals of retention and compensation as intertwined. One planner noted, "if people can't [afford to] live here they won't be retained." Planners mentioned a variety of goals for the Corps. They hoped it would decrease

staff turnover and increase quality of care. Improved retention, increased training, and increased professionalism were key for community stakeholders, who noted, “we have to stabilize the workforce that’s there instead of this bleeding to the dot-coms and the other fields or the school district.” This problem was seen as particularly acute for teachers with more education: “When we talked about it . . . we really focused heavily on that higher end, the B.A.-level teacher. I really think that was wise because we saw the high-end teachers leaving.”

Planners stressed the need to raise educational levels among child-care providers: “Professionalism is education and if you really want to be viewed as professionals, we’ve got to do something about upping the ante. If we just have 12 units [of college credit in child development] we’re never going to get anywhere.” Because of the training requirement, planners believed that the Corps will expand use of the community college system: “. . . in a sense we created the incentive for people to get more training and we also are putting into place a system to provide more training, to assess what is already there and fill the gaps as needed.” This includes encouraging colleges to offer more classes that are relevant to family child-care providers.

Program staff members perceived the goals for the Corps in several ways, notably as a step to long-term, systemic change to improve the care and education of young kids in the county. Professional staff goals for the Corps included increasing the collegial bond among child-care providers, boosting quality through professional development, raising public awareness of the child-care profession, and illuminating the importance of the early years for children and the importance of the quality early care and education. One planner stated the desire to have a lasting impact on the child-care field, creating a professional benchmark for the field.

Program Design

Eligibility Requirements: The Child Development Corps is open to providers and program directors in center-based and family child care, as well as license-exempt providers. To join the Corps in Year 1, an individual was required to have:

- worked as an early childhood educator (in a center or family child care) with children aged birth to five;
- worked at least half time (20 hours per week) in the same child-care program in Alameda County for at least 9 months prior to July 1, 2000.
- completed a minimum of 12 units of Early Childhood Education.

As with the state CARES model, eligibility for particular stipend amounts was based on education level. These stipend levels and tiers paralleled the requirements for the California’s Child Development Permit, the state’s early education credential required for employment at some publicly-funded centers. These requirements are outlined in the Child Development Permit Matrix, which specifies the requirements for each level of the permit from Assistant Teacher to Program Director. Applicants were eligible for increasing stipend levels depending on their level of education. The basic eligibility criteria for the Alameda Child Development Corps are outlined in the table below, although applicants could also qualify based on the permit’s

alternative qualifications. The maximum stipend amounts were reduced to allow funding of all eligible applicants.

Alameda Child Development Corps: Year 1 Stipend Levels

Alameda Child Development Corps Stipends Aligned with Child Development Permit		Stipend Amount	
		Maximum	Actual
Level 1			
Tier 1	Associate Teacher (12 ECE units)	\$500	\$475
Tier 2	Associate Teacher (18 ECE units)	\$750	\$712
Tier 3	Associate Teacher (24 ECE units)	\$1000	\$950
Tier 4	Associate Teacher (24 ECE units + 8 GE units)	\$1250	\$1,188
Level 2			
Tier 1	Teacher (24 ECE units + 16 GE units)	\$1,500	\$1,350
Tier 2	Master Teacher (AA with 24 ECE units, 6 units administration, 2 units adult supervision)	\$2,500	\$2,250
Tier 3	Program Director (BA with 24 units ECE, 6 units administration, 2 units adult supervision)	\$6,000	\$5,100
Additional Stipends			
Language	Fluent in at least one language in addition to English; use it on the job	\$500	\$300
Graduate	Possess master's or graduate degree	\$500	\$325

Continuing Eligibility Requirements: Planners also wanted to encourage professionalism by requiring training. For example, to continue receiving a stipend in subsequent years, Corps members “have to stay within the training field, and we’ve got a very broad way you can stay trained.” The Corps required that members fulfill a number of requirements to be eligible for a stipend in future years:

- Attend one Child Development Corps seminar.
- Apply for or hold a Child Development Permit
- Learn how to conduct an assessment using the Clifford-Harms Rating Scale (ECERS, ITERS or FDCERS)
- Conduct an assessment of his/her classroom or family child care using the appropriate scale.
- Complete additional training or education:
 - Level 1 members: 3 semester units
 - Level 2 members: 21 professional growth hours

Corps members could also choose to pursue additional coursework in order to be eligible for a higher stipend.

System Supports: The Alameda County Children and Families Commission Early Care and Education component also includes funding for three career advisors, one at each of the county's Resource and Referral Agencies, and four professional development coordinators, one at each of the community colleges. Planners and program staff viewed these system support positions as crucial to fostering collaboration between the various agencies that provide training and professional development opportunities for child-care providers. Both the career advisors and the professional development coordinators help child-care providers access coursework and navigate the child development permit requirements.

Key Design Decisions: Early in the program planning process, the Planning Council's Needs Assessment Committee made several critical decisions regarding the Corps, notably the decision to base the Corps' eligibility requirements on the Child Development Permit Matrix. As a result, the Corps was designed to rely almost exclusively on education credits to determine initial stipend level. Yet several planners felt the matrix was flawed, particularly in how it relates to providers of family child care. While the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) had begun developing a separate matrix for family child care, it had not been completed. Planners nevertheless decided to adhere to the Matrix in an effort to establish the professional standard for the field. One planner explained that the group wanted to take the codified professional growth system that California already had in place, and "put the weight of Alameda County behind it and then see how it works."

The Needs Assessment Committee also made decisions about who would qualify for the Corps, the minimum number of units required for eligibility, and whether participant income would be considered in making stipend awards. The committee decided that Corps members must have a minimum of 12 ECE units, and made the decision to award stipends to all qualified applicants rather than prioritize applicants based on income. These two decisions reflected a focus on professional development over compensation. The program rewards and encourages education, but does not target low-wage earners. One planner noted that there was not consensus on this issue, explaining "if it's a professional development program then [provider's] compensation doesn't have anything to do with their stipend. If it's a compensation program then you need to direct it to the people who are most at risk...I've never been in a discussion around CARES where there has been agreement on this subject."

There was also extensive discussion about whether individual license-exempt providers would be eligible for the Corps. There were "many arguments over that and many of us got our minds changed. We did include all the people in that particular category in the end because it would be one more way of professionalizing the field." Similar discussions took place about family child care, how best to do outreach to these providers, and whether their eligibility requirements should match those of center-based providers.

Diversity of Views: Some questioned whether the Corps stipend program could actually address the problem of low compensation or even retention in the child-care field. One stakeholder was concerned that the program was too diverse in its goals and strategies. He also felt that the stipend amounts were inadequate given the rising cost of living, particularly housing, in the Bay Area. He expressed a need for higher wages. "I still think that you're not going to solve the

issue of quality until you pay people adequately.” He thought the stipend might lead to more training in the short run, because “it will continue to encourage people to go to school because they want to get it the next year.” A number of individuals saw the Corps as a first step towards advocating for more public money for child care, noting how much funding it takes to provide stipends. “In terms of the Prop 10 strategic plan [the Corps] was one of the largest line items on the budget . . . Hopefully legislators will realize how much of an investment we all need to make.”

One stakeholder felt that the stipend idea was a first step in getting money for child-care workers, but was not sure that it would result in increased retention. ” We thought it was a plausible way to get money I think, but we didn’t really think of it as the solution to retaining the staff.” A number of community stakeholders felt that the recognition the stipend provides could motivate people to stay in the field and work to improve compensation. “It’s really important for [child-care teachers] to feel like, ‘I really like coming to work. And I know maybe I’ve made a monetary sacrifice being in the child-care profession but this is what makes up for it.’ I think that’s what the Child Development Corps is trying to address . . . elevating the field to make . . . people feel like they’re really part of something that’s important and respected.”

Evaluation and Indicators of Effectiveness

The Corps tracks members using a database that includes information about continued education and professional development. In Year 2, the program will measure quality of selected child-care centers through professional assessors using the Harms-Clifford Environmental Rating Scale. The Corps is also participating in the PACE (Policy Analysis for California Education) evaluation funded through the California Children and Families Commission.

Lessons Learned

In reviewing the planning process for the program, planners, advocates and community stakeholders in Alameda:

Goals

- ✓ Identified a variety of goals for the Corps, including:
 - increased training and professional development among providers;
 - heightened awareness of the importance of early care and education,
 - development of professional networks for child-care providers;
 - improved quality of care;
 - fostering of advocacy for change in the fields such as improved compensation and increased professionalism.

- ✓ Noted that the CARES/ Child Development Corps stipends were a vital first step in raising child-care compensation, but not the ultimate solution.

Funding and Advocacy

- ✓ Recognized that the county's long history of advocacy and research concerning the child-care workforce could be harnessed in developing an effective training and retention initiative.
- ✓ Recognized the importance of forging alliances among the segments of the child-care community, as well as between these groups and the health care and family support communities.

Program Design

- ✓ Agreed that linking professional growth and training to enhanced compensation could address the problems of high turnover, low wages and declining educational levels in child care.
- ✓ Considered recognition and professional esteem as important factors in child-care job satisfaction.
- ✓ Identified a need to align the Child Development Permit Matrix more closely to the field of child care, particularly family child care.
- ✓ Designed the Corps to establish the Child Development Permit as a credential for the field, not just a requirement for certain centers, and hoped this would create pressure for modifications to the requirements, such as acceptance of units from alternative training programs.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND IMPLEMENTATION

Home Agency

The Alameda County Children and Families Commission manages Proposition 10 funding through Every Child Counts, a comprehensive set of services outlined in the Commission's strategic plan. The Corps was built into the Every Child Counts ECE component from the beginning. The Commission's nine members reflect the ethnic and geographic diversity of the county.

Capacity and Resources of Home Agency: The decision to administer the Corps through the County Commission was deliberate. Given the scope of the Corps, planners thought that no single community agency could handle the project. In terms of essential resources for a home agency, program staff underscored the importance of leadership at the top that understands the need for long-term investment in quality child care. One staff member felt that the Corps program "clarified the role of child care more realistically than any other program" she knew of. Because of this clarity, she thought that the home agency leadership and commissioners understood the importance of a skilled and stable workforce in child care, even though some came from other disciplines. Staff members of the County Commission were perceived as highly committed to the goal of integrating child care, family support, and community outreach services. Staff thought that leadership should also have experience in program operation and know how to mobilize multicultural outreach.

Program Staffing

The County Commission employs three full-time staff to coordinate the Child Development Corps. The director of the County Commission's ECE component oversees the Corps. She is the former child-care coordinator for the county, and she supervises the work of a full-time management specialist and a Corps outreach coordinator. During the first twelve months of the program, a part-time consultant advised on the formation and development of the Corps and supporting ECE programs. Program staff considered the input of this consultant to be invaluable, because he had experience with running a statewide professional development program, the California Early Childhood Mentor Program, and could define the staffing and budget resources as well as the community supports needed to successfully administer the Corps.

Staffing Challenges: In the program's first year, the Corps did not have any full-time administrative support, though funds existed for this purpose. Program staff agreed that their workload and hours were overwhelming, and cited the need for additional people to provide administrative support and technical expertise, even data entry support. They noted that a slow bureaucracy made hiring difficult. Because of tasks like copying, collating, and returning calls, staff had less time to devote to other responsibilities. In addition to meeting these administrative needs, future plans include completion of the professional development and training component of the program. The career advisors at the R&Rs were in place early, but the process of negotiating contracts for professional development coordinators who would link the Corps with the county's four community colleges took longer.

Background and Qualifications: Corps staff identified the qualities and qualifications needed to run the program well. They agreed that staff implementing a child-care retention incentive program would benefit from the following expertise and experience:

- child-care experience and background with the county and its resources
- ability to juggle many tasks simultaneously
- analytical skills
- flexibility
- sensitivity
- public presentation skills
- ability to work with a diverse population.

Corps staff also mentioned that they wished they had greater linguistic abilities, as well as computer and technical skills. Staff thought that openness to multiple viewpoints was also an asset. One participant noted that child care is a fragmented industry, with “people who come in from very different paths.”

Advisory Groups

Two advisory groups guide the Corps: the Proposition 10 Advisory Committee of the Alameda Child Care Planning Council, and the Corp’s Technical Advisory Committee or TAC. The Prop 10 Advisory Committee evolved out of the Planning Council’s Needs Assessment Committee that was instrumental in planning for the Corps. The group reports to the Planning Council as a whole and continues to advise the County Commission on all aspects of early care and education--the big picture--including the Corps, but does not make binding decisions. This Planning Council Committee designated the Technical Advisory Committee as the implementation advisory group, guiding specific program decisions.

Composition: Program staff selected the ten TAC members to be representative of the pool of stipend recipients. Its members include representatives from family child-care programs and from nonprofit, for-profit and subsidized child-care centers, and an ECE instructor from a local community college. TAC members represented diverse ethnic and language backgrounds and geographic regions within the county. Representatives from the county’s three R&Rs act as consultants to the TAC. TAC members felt that the committee membership had been well-designed: “It was really thoughtful in how it was put together, and we were all clear what constituency we were representing when we were there.”

Decision making process: The TAC used a consensus decision-making process, and members were pleased with how the process worked. “Everybody had a chance to share what they felt about the issues...everybody felt heard.” TAC members thought that the consensus process unified the group, “At the end of every decision, we were all in agreement...I never walked away...thinking I had to give up my position on something because everyone else was against me.”

Role: The TAC makes final decisions on implementation issues for the Corps, and served as the grievance committee for appeals from Corps applicants. TAC members felt their role was clearly defined. They reviewed and refined the Corps application, established guidelines for contested applications, and designed the appeals process. They also provided support and guidance to the Corps advisors through the application process.

Agenda: Corps staff set the agenda for the TAC. Members reported that their responsibilities never seemed overwhelming and that the goals for the meetings were clear, so at the end of the evening “we always felt we had accomplished something.” TAC members reported feeling very powerful, because their decisions had direct implications on the amount of the stipend applicants received. This power made some TAC members uncomfortable about the responsibility of their decisions. Despite these misgivings, they felt they were the right people to make the decisions. One member explained: “We were the perfect people. We don’t want legislators, who don’t understand what the goal is in the field, making the decisions. We wanted the people who are there in the front line who actually do the work to make the decisions.”

Outreach and Recruitment

The Child Development Corps announced its launch widely in the county. The Corps designed and printed posters, brochures, and information sheets. California State Assembly member Dion Aroner and County Supervisor Wilma Chan heralded the program at a large kick-off event in Oakland in May of 2000. The event received local newspaper, television and radio coverage.

Information about the Corps was presented at conferences in the county, at child-care association meetings, and at several meetings of child-care directors. Mailings went to every family child-care home and child-care center in the county, as well as to license-exempt providers paid through the county’s alternate payment programs that administer child-care subsidies.

Overall, focus group participants thought that the outreach effort for 2000 was highly successful. They expressed surprise and amazement at the number of applications that the Corps received, and felt good about the breadth of the outreach: “The Corps program motivated lots of people, and they felt like they were finally being validated. It was kind of a breath of fresh air.” Center-based participants saw flyers posted by their directors and also learned about the program through information shared at meetings. Some participants saw information in a newspaper or received a flyer in the mail.

Family child-care participants heard about the program mainly through word-of-mouth, from such sources as former co-workers who are teachers and directors at centers, college instructors, staff at R&Rs, and parents of the children in their care. Planners thought that family providers were somewhat easier to reach because letters could be sent to them directly. Family child-care providers generally felt that information had reached them as well as center-based staff, but expressed concerns that not enough family providers had joined the Corps. A further challenge to outreach was that many individuals in family child care are recent immigrants who do not speak English. Other concerns, raised by community stakeholders, were that individual exempt providers who are not paid through the child-care subsidy system were missed in the outreach effort.

Center directors heard about the Corps through a variety of sources: through students and instructors at community colleges, through local R&Rs, and through the Early Childhood Mentor Program. Several directors reported that they had used the Corps posters to make their employees aware of the program, in addition to discussing the Corps at staff meetings and placing information in the staff newsletter. Many of the directors noted that they tried to make sure everyone who was eligible applied.

While most child-care center staff reported that everyone in their centers knew about the program, they felt that more publicity might have been helpful. For the Year 2 outreach effort, focus group participants suggested more advertising on television, radio, billboards and buses, as well as using the state child-care licensing office as a contact and providing more information at local child-care conferences.

Peer Outreach

The County Commission recruited and trained 24 Corps Advisors to assist Corps applicants in completing their applications and to verify their transcripts and other documentation during the two-month application period. Corps advisors were recruited from the child-care profession, and received a 500 dollar stipend; many became Corps members as well. Corps advisors were supervised by the outreach coordinator, who oversaw their training. The advisors felt that the Corps had done a very good job of recruiting advisors that reflected the county's geographic and language communities, with many bilingual advisors. In Year 2, the number of Corps advisors increased to 32.

Focus group participants thought that having a wide variety of places and times for filling out applications was critical to making the application process accessible. Corps advisors stressed the need to be flexible, in order to meet the needs of applicants who often lacked reliable transportation. Corps advisors would either go to a child-care center at the invitation of a director to help staff members complete their applications, or would respond individually to phone calls from potential applicants. Several Corps advisors made brief presentations to classes at the community colleges to explain what the Corps was all about and how to apply. In addition, the county's Resource & Referral agencies hosted drop-in application nights, and Corps advisors credited the R&R agencies with distributing a great deal of information throughout the application period. One Corps advisor noted that it was helpful to work at a site with other advisors so they could confer about eligibility questions. Familiarity with transcripts also proved helpful.

Some focus group participants thought that the Corps advisors did not have enough training and that the stipend was inadequate and actually perpetuated the problem of low and unpaid work in the field of child care. There was also an uneven distribution of work, with some advisors meeting with 50 applicants and some meeting with 150.

There was general agreement among program staff that the Corps advisor system had facilitated the application process, and applicants were generally pleased with the assistance they received from advisors. "It was brilliant," one person commented. Another staff member said that the advisor system "put a friendly face" on the program and helped the advisors themselves become

leaders. The advisors became the “ambassadors and the spokespeople...and they are the ones who really bought in.” Having the Corps advisors review and send in the applications meant that they were generally clear and complete by the time they arrived at the County Commission. The application process, including review of transcripts and credits, was nevertheless very time-consuming.

The large pool of volunteer Corps advisors did leave to some confusion, though. Family child-care providers reported varied experiences in getting their questions about their applications and eligibility answered by Corps advisors, and some reported that they did not always know whom to call to get accurate information.. Some advisors were unable to help because they were not familiar with courses that had been taught years ago; others simply interpreted the eligibility requirements differently. This gave rise to some fears that from applicants that they had received incorrect information from advisors.

Application and Eligibility Determination

The Year 2000 Corps application forms were three pages long, with one version for center staff, directors, and staff in family child-care homes, and one version for family child-care licensees. The application period was May and June of 2000, with a June 30 deadline.

Although there were challenges, program participants had mainly positive experiences in completing their applications. They felt that the questions on the application forms and the descriptions of the eligibility requirements were reasonably clear, although applicants who did not hold state child development permits found the process a little confusing. Advisors working with applicants noted that two areas seemed to create the most confusion and resentment: the stipulation of at least nine months employment in a current position prior to applying, and the requirements for the language stipend.

Documentation and Verification: Applicants were required to provide transcripts to document their level of education, as well as written verification of employment. Some Corps members thought they needed a longer application time period to get together these supporting materials for the application. Immigrants faced the challenge of getting transcripts from other countries and getting foreign transcripts and degrees officially evaluated for equivalency. To qualify for a supplemental language stipend, an applicant was required to have his or her director sign a portion of the application certifying the applicant’s fluency in a foreign language and the use of that language in communicating with program children, families, or staff. Directors and family child-care operators certified their own language fluency and use on the application. A directors signature was also required to certify the other eligibility requirements, such as the nine-month tenure requirement.

Role of Center Directors: Directors were pleased with the application process and had no complaints about their role in it. Directors saw their role as motivating their employees to apply for the Corps and “making it easy” to apply. The directors said it was easy to certify application information for their staff members. One director reported typing in the salary directly onto all her employees’ applications. Many directors had Corps advisors come to their centers to encourage their employees to apply or even served as advisors themselves.

Eligibility Requirements

Generally, focus group participants thought the eligibility requirements were fair. Directors expressed ambivalence about whether more highly-paid staff should be eligible for stipends, notably those teachers who work for school districts and are paid on a higher scale than staff at other programs. Many of the other concerns about the eligibility requirements for the program stemmed from the Corps' reliance on the Child Development Permit and the rules and regulations of the agency that grants the permits, the CCTC. For example:

- The CCTC does not accept Montessori training that is not offered through an accredited institution such as a community college, so providers who had been trained through many Montessori programs found that these units were not counted.⁸
- Several Corps members were disturbed that a person with a B.A. and 12 units in early childhood education earned a higher level than someone with more ECE units and more experience working with children, but no B.A. As one individual put it, "Having a B.A. doesn't make you an early childhood expert!"
- Others noted that the permit matrix did not make sense for family child care, and that linking eligibility to the matrix left out many family providers who were already isolated and many of whom are immigrants who, "really have not had much experience with formal educational settings."

On the other hand, another trainer felt it was important to have the same standards for family and for center-based providers. She argued that the family child-care providers then feel that they are being treated as equals. For Year 2, planners noted that they intend to revise and clarify some of the eligibility requirements, particularly those pertaining to family child care.

Corps program staff generally felt good about the requirements put into place: "We matched our system with the state guidelines that are already in place... that is a big backbone for us." Staff pointed out that, down the road, advocates would be able to build leverage to influence change at the state level as trouble spots were identified.

Exclusion of School Age Providers: Other concerns were a result of requirements of the Corps' funding, which is reserved for programs that support children from birth up to age five. Several directors noted that the exclusion of teachers of school-age children from the program was difficult at sites that serve young children as well as older children. They reported that kindergarten teachers who work with five and six year olds felt that they should be eligible for a stipend. One director juggled the schedules of school-age child-care staff to allow them to work with younger children so they could be eligible for the Corps in Year 2.

⁸ Through a small pilot project begun in 1999, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing does accept some units offered by three Montessori teacher training programs in California: Montessori Teachers College in Sacramento, Montessori Western Teachers Training Program in Garden Grove, and the San Francisco Bay Area Montessori Teacher Education Center.

Tenure Requirement: The nine-month rule excluded a few applicants with compelling situations. Some applicants were ineligible under this rule because they were out on disability leave; some were teachers who had been in the field for years but had just left an undesirable work environment. The nine-month requirement was designed to exclude job-hoppers: “We wanted to people who were thinking of not just their own comfort at the center but...of the consequences for the kids,” explained one planner. TAC members described the decision to uphold this requirement, “We weren’t inflexible because you could appeal, but...we had to draw the line somewhere... it was heart-wrenching.” Despite the concerns, some Corps members supported this requirement: “I work with very young children and the most important thing that they need is consistency ...I’m glad they set that standard and they should keep to it.”

Language Stipend: Eligibility for the second language stipend became an especially thorny area. TAC members felt that people for speaking another language but it proved difficult to define and document second language use. “We all agreed that there should be an extra stipend for...people who use the other language in their jobs...but that became a very big issue. Are you saying ‘buenas dias’ every morning...or are you actually working with kids in a bilingual setting...” After discussing these issues, the members thought that the Corps staff or the TAC would make changes regarding the language stipends for Year 2.

Graduate Stipend: As to the graduate degree, some thought that the degree should be in the child development field. Some center directors felt that it was fair to give a graduate degree stipend, given the work required to earn the degree. Others felt that a degree meriting an extra stipend should in some clear way benefit the children in the setting.

Stipend Awards and Distribution

The actual stipend awards for Year 1, adjusted because of the high number of eligible applicants, ranged from \$475 to \$5100. The second language supplement was reduced to \$300 and the graduate degree stipend to \$325. In all, 2385 applicants received stipends, for a total of \$4,093,917 disbursed.

Alameda Child Development Corps

Stipend Type	Number Awarded	Total Dollar Amount
Total	2411	4,093,917
Level 1	1181	
Level 2	1230	
Language	684	324,900
Graduate	179	85,025

Stipend Levels: Several individuals remarked that they were disappointed that the actual levels were lower than initially announced; however, others reminded them that this was the first year of the program and there had been no way to predict the level of interest. Finally, a number of program participants commented that in the second year, Corps administrators would have a

better idea of how many people are likely to apply to the program and would therefore be able to plan more appropriate procedures and levels of funding.

Opinions varied regarding the range of stipend amounts. One family child-care provider felt that the upper-level stipends should not go to people who are not working directly with children. She stated: “Someone with a B.A. has more channels and opportunities to make a higher salary... The little people like us don’t have these opportunities. So, we should be offered the higher stipends.” A Corps member suggested that years of experience should be considered for the next year. “It’s not fair for someone who has been working in the field only one or two years should get the same amount as someone who has been working for a long time, just because they have a B.A.” One recipient suggested that everyone should receive the same amount, with no difference between directors and teachers, and another suggested that directors should not be eligible. Similarly, some directors felt they had received more than they deserved, considering that their staff, who made less money, also received smaller stipends. But they also felt that the higher stipends were an incentive to pursue further education.

The Role of Provider Training in Child-Care Quality: Elements of Caregiver Training Raise Child Outcomes

In designing an initiative aimed at increasing quality by targeting early care and education professionals, the key question becomes: what measurable characteristics of caregivers are related quality? Research suggests that a number of caregiver traits, including high levels of provider education, are associated with social, cognitive, and language development for children.

Researchers have found positive effects of high-quality center care through random-assignment experiments involving highly trained teachers who display very low turnover rates. More stable and better-educated center staff are more attentive and sensitive to young children in their classrooms and engage in more age-appropriate activities.

But how much education does it take to achieve the level of quality associated with improved outcomes for children? While research indicates that higher levels of providers training are associated with better quality care, there is evidence that good-quality care may be related to a bachelor’s degree. One study of center-based providers found that although some specialized training in caring for children was associated with increased quality of care, providers with bachelor’s degrees were linked to classrooms that were rated as good or better. Another study of licensed family child-care providers found that levels of education below a B.A. were not associated providers with higher-quality settings.

Based on this empirical evidence, in a guide for Children and Family Commissions Carollee Howes and Jan Brown of the University of California Los Angeles Department of Education suggest that short-term (and relatively inexpensive) efforts to increase specialized provider training may be less effective than efforts to require higher levels of formal education and to improve compensation with the goal of retaining providers with college degrees.*

*Howes, C and J Brown, *Improving Child Care Quality: A Guide for Proposition 10 Commissions*, in N. Halfon, E Shulman, M Shannon and M Hochstein eds., *Building Community Systems for Young Children*, UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, 2000.

Most directors thought that the awards for different levels of education were appropriate. They also reported that their staff members were generally pleased with the stipends, happy to receive something and not so much concerned about the amount. One director pointed out that a lot of work goes into reaching the director level. “I don’t have a high salary and I was very thankful,” a director explained. One planner, citing recent CCW research, noted that the center director levels needed to be high, because the field of child care was also losing directors. A teacher supported this view, noting, “If you have that kind of education, I think you deserve a higher stipend. It also encourages you to go on and get more education.”

Taxes: Income tax was not withheld from stipend awards. This created some confusion among applicants who were not aware that the stipends were taxable as income. Directors were concerned that the stipends were too much money for their staff to receive without having tax withholdings. One director, who had served as a Corps advisor, pointed out that notifying applicants of their tax liability was stressed in the advisor training. Nonetheless, some applicants did not set aside a portion of their stipend for taxes. Several directors strongly recommended that the Corps withhold taxes from Year 2 stipends.

Appeals Process

The TAC established an appeals process for applicants who were denied membership or who wished to contest their stipend level. Applicants received written notice of ineligibility, which cited the specific reasons for denial. Applicants wishing to appeal were instructed to mail their appeals within 20 calendar days of receiving a Corps check or notice of ineligibility. The TAC helped to draft the letter to ineligible applicants, and TAC members thought that requiring ineligible applicants to write an appeal letter was a good guideline, as it required some commitment on the part of the applicant. Program staff screened the appealed applications first to screen out clerical errors that could be resolved without going to the Appeals Committee, a three-person committee assigned by the TAC and composed of a member of the TAC, a member of an ECE professional organization, and a professional growth advisor. Following review within 20 working days, applicants were mailed the final decision. For Year 1, applicants filed 85 appeals, of which 56 were granted.

Program staff generally approved of the appeals process, and reported that many of the appeals stemmed from clerical errors. Another mentioned that numerous applicants felt they were entitled to the language stipend. Program staff suggested having an outside person, such as a Corps Advisor, screen the appeals: “It would have been better if we had someone else doing the [screening of appeals] ...it shouldn’t be done by the staff who made the initial decision.” The Appeals Committee made final decisions about eligibility; one applicant challenged the committee’s decision, presenting her case to the members of the County Children and Families Commission, and the Commissioners upheld the process established by the TAC.

Continued Eligibility Requirements

As part of continuing support for Corps members, the Corps held three child development seminars in 2000; Corps members were required to attend one seminar to be eligible for a stipend

in Year 2. In addition, a county-wide training event was held to teach Corps members to use the Harms-Clifford Rating Scale. The Corps also trained members in how to apply for a Child Development Permit. Corps members received a flier with their stipend check that outlined the Corps continuing eligibility requirements. These requirements were reiterated throughout the year at the Corps seminars, through a postcard, and with mailings about the various training and workshops sponsored by the Corps.

Reactions to the Corps' continuing eligibility requirements were mixed. Some Corps members were confused and resentful about the requirements, while others understood what they needed to do to remain eligible for the Corps and reported that they were enjoying their coursework and professional development. Many directors were supportive of the continuing eligibility requirements, which they viewed as motivating staff to pursue further coursework and professional development.

Seminars: Some Corps members complained about the requisite Corps seminar, reporting that they could not get their questions answered and that there were not enough permit applications available. The CCTC only issues a limited number of permit applications at a time, and some forms are on carbon paper and therefore cannot be copied. Others were pleased with the information they received at these seminars, and enjoyed the opportunity to network with other early care and education providers.

Child Development Permit: Some focus group participants were concerned about the child development permit requirement, arguing that it is redundant for providers who already held another credential. Others thought the permit application process is too cumbersome, and that it is difficult for providers who are working full time to obtain the correct livescan fingerprint and to “work through the maze” to show that their coursework matches the permit requirements.

Self-Assessment: Some Corps members were upset that the Corps offered a workshop led by Dr. Thelma Harms, one of the developers of the Harms-Clifford Environmental Rating Scale, on a weekday when many of them could not attend. While there were many other subsequent ECERS trainings, providers were disappointed to have missed Dr. Harms herself. As one director explained, “we could provide the training but not Thelma Harms.”

Lessons Learned

Budgeting and Contracting

- ✓ Financial planning and day-to-day program management may be unnecessarily challenging without a clearly delineated and separate Corps budget.
- ✓ To ensure that positions are filled in a timely manner, it may be useful to specify hiring timelines in contracts with collaborating agencies.

Staffing

- ✓ To be effective, program staff require many attributes: a child care background, analytical skills, flexibility, sensitivity, public speaking skills, multi-tasking capacity, and the ability to work with a diverse population.
- ✓ A larger number of Corps advisors may be desirable to meet applicant's needs in Year 2. The advisors may benefit from more training and also from being paid in a more equitable manner, possibly by the number of applications reviewed rather than a flat sum.
- ✓ Ample administrative support is essential to ensure that program staff members have adequate time to perform their professional duties.

Outreach

- ✓ Although outreach was generally successful, different kinds of outreach may be useful in the future: television announcements, more advertising, and more outreach through the community colleges and the state child-care licensing office.
- ✓ Access was the key to outreach success: advisors' willingness to accommodate the applicants' individual needs was a great asset to the application process.
- ✓ Reaching family child-care providers, who tend to be more isolated, may require more extensive outreach efforts.
- ✓ Center directors suggested staff meetings and staff newsletters as good forums for publicizing the program.

Application Process

- ✓ Among the problem areas of the application process are: obtaining and interpreting foreign transcripts; assessing course work, especially when course titles have changed; evaluating graduate degrees in areas outside of early education, and evaluating Montessori credentials.
- ✓ For Corps advisors, the two most problematic areas were verifying that an applicant work nine months in a current position before applying, and determining eligibility for the second language stipend.

Eligibility and Stipend Awards

- ✓ Planners recognized a need to revise and clarify some of the eligibility requirements, especially those pertaining to family child care.

- ✓ To avoid confusion, it may be helpful to withhold taxes from stipend awards; if this is not possible, multiple reminders that taxes were not withheld may encourage recipients to plan for the taxes they will owe on the stipends on April 15th.

Advisory Group

- ✓ In composing a representative technical advisory group like the TAC, it is important to maintain balance among the constituencies making up the group.
- ✓ The consensus method of decision making proved very successful for the TAC and helped to unify the group.
- ✓ Because of the empowering, positive role that serving on the TAC has played for its members, the TAC may help to develop greater leadership capacities within the child-care workforce.

PERCEPTIONS OF PROGRAM EFFECTS

Recognition

There was wide agreement that Corps membership has changed the way many participants feel about themselves in relation to their work. One Corps member stated, “You feel more professional, like you’re important, what you do is important.” Another stated: “Being in the Corps made me feel good about my work. I’ve been working with children for more than thirty years and until now never got even a piece of paper saying ‘we appreciate your service.’ The appreciation is more important than the money.”

Child-care teachers and family child-care providers expressed the fact that parents still seem to see them more as babysitters and less as professionals, a perception that the Corps is helping to change. Receiving the stipend, along with the on-going mentor program in her center, helped one Corps member increase her sense of professionalism. She is pleased to have Corps membership as evidence of her professional status, commenting “that’s how we can be sure that people will take us seriously – by taking classes and showing that we are professional.” Another teacher remarked, “Nothing makes you feel better than for someone to recognize the work you are doing...that’s why I wear my Corps T-shirt so proudly every Friday.”

Professional Networks and Linkages

TAC members were pleased with the energy created by the Corps, which got people “very excited and enthusiastic and hopeful about being in the field.” Corps members reported changes in their professional lives: “I have become more involved professionally; I’m out there more and more aware of what’s happening in the field.” Corps members observed that the Corps has brought child-care providers together and allowed for support as well as exchange of information and ideas: “Because of the networking...I realize I am part of a professional group and that help is available.” One member found the Corps seminars to be “an eye-opener,” because she was able to find out about different programs and professional development opportunities. Participants in family child care credited the Corps with helping them feel less isolated from other adults, especially when attending classes at the colleges. One Corps member described the Corps as “like being in a special club.”

Directors described the way the Corps had unified child-care workers. One director remarked how pleased she was to see a “collegial rapport” develop among her staff. Another valuable change stemming from the program has been the additional contact between center-based and family providers. As one Corps member stated, “The program brings people together. It makes you feel like you have something in common with the family providers, because we all have the same interests.” In a program that uses a team teaching approach, a director noted the way that teachers are supporting each other to make sure everyone qualifies next year. In another child-care setting, a director related how an employee who is uncertain of her English skills partnered with a co-worker to take a class.

Training and Professional Development

Individual Experiences: Corps members reported that they were taking classes to qualify for a stipend in Year 2. One Corps member explained how she was motivated to attend trainings in order to be a resource to her staff. “I seek out trainings and try to go to as many as I can because I know my staff is going to ask me questions. I’ve been helping them apply for their permits.” Corps members mentioned a sort of “positive jealousy” among co-workers, encouraging those who were not eligible before to complete the requirements so they will be ready for next year. In the words of one participant: “Everybody’s going to school so we can all be part of the program, even the directors.”

One center director pointed out that her staff members no longer refuse to get additional training; they know they need it to enter and stay in the Corps. In several cases, participants reported that they have encouraged co-workers to take courses so they will be eligible next year. One trainer, who also directs a center, thought that providers were initially reluctant to enroll in courses, but that they ultimately enjoy the experience. She commented that teachers in her school are “kicking and screaming about taking these classes. Yet when they take the class they’re really happy to be there and they’re excited by it...it just gave them a boot right where they needed it, because there were no classes being taken at all.”

Some trainers were concerned that the Corps had created a stampede for units on the part of providers, without their having any focus or systematic approach to their education. A representative for a private training agency felt that the Corps was a great motivator and was serving to “get people in the door,” but wished they were pursuing coursework more relevant to their job positions.

Opportunities for Leadership: The Corps created or expanded opportunities for leadership within the child-care field, notably:

- trained 24 Corps advisors to guide applicants through the eligibility process
- developed the county’s network of Professional Growth Advisors, child-care professionals who are trained to assist their colleagues in planning professional goals and obtain a Child Development Permit
- funded a career advisor position at each of the county’s three Resource and Referral Agencies
- funded a professional development coordinator position at each of the four community colleges

Corps advisors reported that they felt honored to play an active role bringing more support and respect to their profession. In addition, the 21-hour professional development requirement for continued eligibility created an increased demand for professional growth advisors. To meet this need, the Corps trained 200 Corps members to be professional growth advisors.

System Level Change: Trainers and educators reported that they were seeing an increase in demand for their courses. One community college representative estimated that their child development program had doubled in the last year. They had also seen a “huge increase” in

evening course enrollment. Enrollment in early childhood education courses at the county's four community colleges increased 19 percent, from the 1999-2000 academic year to 2000-2001 academic year. The number of sections offered increased 18 percent in the same time period.

Alameda County Community College Early Childhood Education Courses

	Enrollment			Sections		
	1999-2000	2000-2001	Percent change	1999-2000	2000-2001	Percent change
Chabot	1889	2432	+28	62	70	+13
Las Positas ⁹	759	943	+24	30	35	+17
Merritt	2601	2980	+15	75	100	+33
Ohlone	1054	1161	+10	50	52	+4
Total	6313	7516	+19	217	257	+18

1999-2000 includes three semesters: summer 1999, fall 1999, and spring 2000

2000-2001 includes three semester: summer 2000, fall 2000, spring 2001

Source: Alameda County community colleges

Community colleges reported adding sections of specific courses to meet the needs of Corps members, and offering more sections in the evenings. For example, Chabot College reported adding several sections:

- *Adult Supervision*: two sections for spring 2001 and one section for summer 2001
- *Introductory Early Care and Education*: bilingual (Spanish-English) class for spring 2001 and off-campus course for summer 2001
- *Curriculum*: evening course for spring and summer 2001
- *Supervised field experience*: two evening sections for fall 2001
- *Administration*: summer section and two evening sections for fall 2001

The bilingual course, designed for child-care professionals with limited English, began with instruction primarily in Spanish. Subsequent courses will be conducted increasingly in English, preparing students with limited English to navigate standard coursework by the time they complete their initial twelve units.

Despite the addition of courses by the local community colleges, one trainer was concerned that large stipends at the high end, which require adult supervision units, had created a demand that the county's training system could not meet. She cautioned that this situation could lead to disgruntled Corps members who were unable to enroll in the courses they needed to be eligible for a higher stipend.

Permit Applications: The Corps trained 1,400 members on how to apply for a Child Development Permit. The Child Development Training Consortium, which facilitates applications for Child Development Permits and has funds to cover the application fees, processed 953 applications from Alameda County in the 2000-2001 fiscal year, a 237 percent

⁹ Does not include summer session.

increase from the previous year. Total applications processed from providers across the state, increased 24 percent in the same time period. When compared to total application numbers from each county in the state for the same time period, this increase is statistically significant at an alpha level of .05; in other words, it is unlikely to be due to random variation. One planner reflected on the significance of the increase in permit applications. “For the first time we’ve brought so many people in Alameda County into the state permit structure . . .that, in my mind, adds another dimension to the people seeing themselves as professional, as part of a professional licensing system that is comparable to teachers and nurses.”

Child Development Permit Applications Processed by the Child Development Training Consortium

	FY 1999-2000	FY 2000-2001	Percent Change
Alameda	283	953	+237
Statewide	4,065	5,035	+24

Source: Child Development Training Consortium

Retention

There were mixed impressions of whether the stipends would reduce turnover in the field. One trainer thought that providers viewed the stipend more as an entitlement than as an incentive to stay in the field: “A lot of people saw it as, ‘you owe us this money. This is money that we earned long ago.’ And so trying to tell people that, ‘oh no, this is actually part of a structured program to help people stay in the field.’ I think most people really thought, ‘No, no. This is just my bonus that I earned five years ago.’ ”

Still, some focus group participants did report that the Corps was improving retention. One director noted that her center was losing fewer people to the school district. Another felt that the Corps had improved retention at her center; in addition, as providers gain more units they can also move into better positions. In fact, one director stated that she encourages her staff to move to the school district once they get the state permit, because she recognizes that her center does not pay a sustainable wage.

Several Corps members reported that the program affected their decision to stay in the field. For example, one member explained, “I’m expecting my first baby in August and was considering leaving the field for a while. Now with the stipend and an incentive through my agency for discounted childcare, it’s really encouraging me to come back.” The Corps program offers new hope for staying by providing the additional money. Members credited the Corps with encouraging people to stay in the field because of the new training and professional development opportunities, which will help raise the quality of the work experience.

Quality of Care

Several Corps members mentioned that their membership had inspired their co-workers to return to school. The additional coursework is already improving the work of some of these co-workers. Directors have observed that their staff members are applying in the classroom what they are learning in their courses. One director described a hard-to-motivate employee who rearranged her classroom, “which I’d been harping on for years.”

TAC members and stakeholders alike felt that the requirement that providers perform an ECERS self-assessment will lead to increased program quality. The Corps trained 1500 members in the Harms-Clifford Rating Scale. Providers shared what they learned while assessing their classrooms. One director called it “a stroke of genius” to include the ECERS as a requirement for continued Corps participation. Directors felt the ECERS was straightforward and easy for providers to understand, and that tying the scale to the stipend has given it added credibility and acceptance. One director had previously tried to introduce the ECERS to her staff, with no success. Directors reported that the scale provided a common language for discussing quality improvement, both between supervisors and their employees and among co-workers.

Lessons Learned

- ✓ The Corps is beginning to foster a sense of professionalism, collegiality, and pride among its members.
- ✓ Corps members increasingly are supporting each other, increasing their professional networks and exchanging information and ideas.
- ✓ Enrollment in early childhood education courses at Alameda County community colleges has increased, as have permit applications from providers in the county.
- ✓ Although the Corps has motivated providers to enroll in more courses, additional career planning could prevent individuals from taking courses indiscriminately.
- ✓ Child-care providers are not motivated solely by financial concerns; they mentioned recognition, as well as pride and pleasure in their work as other critical factors.
- ✓ Although major changes in quality of care are not yet evident, some directors believe that the Corps’ emphasis on increased training and self-assessment is beginning to influence program quality.

Appendix: Methodology for the Qualitative Implementation Study of the Alameda Child Development Corps Program

Sources

The final report of the qualitative study draws on three sources of information: focus groups, interviews, and background materials.

Focus Groups: Between December 2000 and April 2001, PACE conducted twelve focus groups with people who have been involved in the Alameda Child Development Corps. PACE conducted two separate focus groups with community stakeholders in Alameda county, and three focus groups with stipend recipients: level 1 recipients, level 2 recipients, and family child-care providers.

Year 1 Focus Groups

Planners	Key players involved with developing the program design and identifying program funding
Community Stakeholders	Representatives from local Resource and Referral agencies (R&Rs), school districts and other local government and child-care agencies
Outreach Participants	Individuals who were not on the program's payroll who assisted with recruitment and provided support to applicants
Program Staff	Staff responsible for implementing the program
Program Participants	Stipend recipients, grouped by level and/or licensing type (center, FCC, exempt)
Advisory Group	Members of the program's advisory group
Center Directors	Directors of local centers (subsidized, non-profit, and for-profit, all sizes) who have staff participating in the program and can discuss both the application process and the effect of the program at the center level
Educators/Trainers	Instructors and administrators at local community colleges, training coordinators at local R&Rs, and representatives from other professional development institutions who can discuss training needs and their perceptions of program effect

Interviews: PACE conducted follow-up interviews to gather information not covered in the focus groups, and/or to capture perspectives of individuals who could not attend the focus groups.

Background materials: PACE also relied on program materials, such as the application, outreach materials and meeting minutes that provide valuable background about the program. PACE obtained enrollment numbers from staff at the community colleges.

Confidentiality

PACE assures confidentiality to all study participants and gained written informed consent from all focus group and interview participants.

Generalizability

Statements of focus group participants may reflect an individual, rather than a more widely-held, perspective. PACE has made an effort to highlight those perspectives that came up more than once, voiced by more than one participant and in more than one focus group.