



PACE WORKING PAPER SERIES 03-5
Child Development Projects

A Case Study of Alameda County Child Development Corps: Year 2 Qualitative Implementation Study (QIS)

Policy Analysis for California Education
University of California, Berkeley and Davis
Stanford University

November 2003

Research supported by:



**A Case Study of Alameda County
Child Development Corps:
Year 2 Qualitative Implementation Study (QIS)**

Laura Ruth Johnson
University of California, Berkeley

Seeta A. Pai
University of California, Berkeley

November 2003



Policy Analysis for
California Education

PACE

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	2
Methodology	3
Participants	3
Data Collection and Analysis Procedures	4
Purpose of Study	4
County Context	5
Program History and Design	10
Year 1 of the Alameda Child Development Corps: Successes and Challenges	11
Year 2	11
Program Design	13
Program Structure and Implementation	18
Home Agency	18
Program Staffing	18
Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)	19
Outreach and Recruitment	19
Application Process	20
Eligibility Requirements and Stipend Levels	21
Stipend Award and Distribution	22
Appeals	22
Continuing Eligibility Requirements	23
Lessons Learned	23
Perceptions of Program Effects	25
Recognition	25
Professional Networks and Linkages	25
Training and Professional Development	26
Retention	27
Quality of Care	27
The Importance of Advocacy	28
The Future of the Corps: Sustainability	28
Conclusions: Findings and Implications	29
Appendix: Descriptions of focus group participants	31

Executive Summary

This report on the second year of the implementation of Alameda County's Child Development Corps (the Corps) as a child-care retention-incentive program describes perspectives and experiences of various stakeholders regarding several components of the program's structure, implementation, and effects. These findings are drawn from focus group data; group interviews were conducted with program planners and funders, program staff, stipend recipients, and other members of the early care and education (ECE) community in Alameda County. In addition to detailing perspectives on the implementation and effects of the program in Year 2, this report provides guidelines and lessons for policymakers, program planners, ECE advocates, and others who are planning similar initiatives to improve retention. This study is part of a larger evaluation of Child-Care Retention Incentive (CRI) programs in San Francisco and Alameda counties being conducted by PACE (Policy Analysis for California Education) at the University of California, Berkeley.

Stated program goals for the Alameda Corps program in Year 2 include: (1) creating an incentive for ECE staff members to continue their training and remain in the field; (2) encouraging and organizing professional development experiences for ECE staff; (3) building support for this community and establishing a strong network of ECE professionals.

Stipend recipients were, by and large, satisfied with the application and stipend distribution processes, and with the quality and availability of program staff, but some disagreements surrounded the specificities of stipend awards for those who were bilingual, and for those who possessed a graduate degree.

In terms of program effects, recipients valued the monetary and professional recognition conferred by the program, as well as opportunities for professional development, networking, and advocacy. In particular, Alameda's program was characterized by its rigorous professional development/training criteria for continuing stipend eligibility and perceived impetus for educational advancement. However, focus group participants representing various constituencies felt that the program could not function alone in addressing ECE staff retention—the stipend would not necessarily cause staff to stay in their jobs. They agreed that solutions for these staffing problems need to be implemented within a larger system of support and advocacy for the field, which includes raising public awareness of issues facing the ECE workforce, expanding local opportunities for professional development, and exerting pressure on policymakers for funding to augment ECE staff salaries permanently.

Introduction

Young children's cognitive, social, and emotional development has been shown to be positively associated with consistent, sensitive care-giving in early care and education (ECE) settings.ⁱ Close and stable relationships established with caregivers are more likely to help young children feel happy and secure while away from their parents.ⁱⁱ Frequent turnover of teachers may leave children feeling anxious and withdrawn, can weaken the quality of the ECE environment, and can have negative consequences for children's early learning and development.^{iii, iv} Turnover further affects the ECE environment through negative effects on staff morale and job performance.^v

ECE staff turnover is widespread; findings from recent studies conducted across the U.S. include ranges from 20-42% annually.^{vi, vii} A survey of 75 centers in Northern California found that 76% of all of the staff members who worked in these centers in 1996 were no longer there four years later.^{viii}

Low wages characteristic of the ECE profession have been identified as primary grounds for low retention or high turnover.^{ix} In 2001, the average wage for a "child-care worker", according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, was \$8.16 per hour. Although those who defined themselves as preschool teachers fared better, earning around \$10 per hour on average, at the time, this wage was still less than half of what kindergarten teachers earned annually.^x

Given these documented linkages between wages and turnover, and between caregiver stability and children's development, retention and quality improvement efforts in ECE have increasingly concentrated on raising staff income, and on encouraging additional training and professional development, particularly for entry-level teachers.

In 1999, both Alameda and San Francisco counties initiated child-care retention incentive (CRI) programs. These programs were designed to reduce turnover and retain educated ECE staff by providing monetary stipends to individuals who met certain tenure and education requirements. First 5 California Children and Families Commission (First 5 California) funded Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) to evaluate these two counties' initiatives. The PACE evaluation consisted of two components. One component is a quantitative outcome study measuring program effects in terms of retention and professional development, and the other is a qualitative study that examined how the programs have been implemented.

This document, the Alameda Child Development Corps Year 2 Qualitative Study Report, is a synthesis of findings from the second year of the implementation study of the Alameda Child Development Corps. The purpose of this report is to summarize the experiences of the many people involved in Alameda County's program and to indicate any major changes in the program from its first year of implementation. It is also intended to serve as a resource to policy-makers and

program planners seeking to implement programs that address the problem of high turnover among ECE professionals.

This report is divided into five sections: Methodology, County context, Program history and planning, Program structure and implementation, and Perceptions of program effects.

I. **Methodology** offers a synopsis of data collection and analysis procedures, and also includes goals and purposes of the evaluation.

II. **County context** provides an overview of the ECE field in the county. This section outlines demand and supply for child care, provides a portrait of the ECE workforce, and includes a discussion of the ECE training system. In addition, this section describes local economic issues and how these conditions contributed to the shifting context in which Alameda Child Development Corps functioned and developed.

III. **Program history and design** describes some of the successes and challenges of Year 1 program implementation, as well as outlines the basic elements of the Alameda Corps program and the design of program components in Year 2. Also included here is feedback from focus group participants regarding their understanding of the purpose and goals of the program. This section contains demographic information on Year 2 recipients.

IV. **Program structure and implementation** portrays participants' experiences with the various components of Alameda Corps, including the home agency, staffing, recruitment and outreach, application process, eligibility determination, stipend awards, appeals, and advisory committee.

V. **Perceptions of program effects** summarizes the changes that focus group participants have observed on an individual level—in their lives and among their colleagues—as well as more broadly in the local ECE field, including increased recognition, professional networks, training and professional development, retention, and changes in quality of care provided.

Methodology

Participants

The data for this qualitative evaluation were collected via focus groups conducted with various meetings of individuals who were involved in the planning and/or implementation of the Alameda Child Development Corps, or who were directly affected by the initiative. Ten focus groups^{xi} were conducted in total, and included representatives of the following constituencies: program staff, outreach consultants, members of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), community stakeholders, support systems

collaborators, family child-care recipients, and, among center-based recipients: returning recipients (Levels 1 & 2), new recipients (Levels 1 & 2), and center directors. Phone interviews were completed with first-year recipients who did not re-apply in Year 2, as well as with County Commissioners, who oversaw the funding of the program. In addition, representatives from the community college system and other local organizations and institutions providing ECE training were surveyed via mail and telephone.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Focus groups were 45 minutes to one-and-a-half hours in length and primarily took place at local Resource & Referral agencies. The number of participants in each focus group varied widely, from three to ten, with the average being five people. Individuals were chosen for inclusion in the focus groups (except for the four recipient groups) on account of their roles and involvement in the Alameda Child Development Corps initiative. Stipend recipients participating in the groups were selected randomly from a list of consenting recipients. Individuals participating in most of the focus groups were reimbursed \$45 to cover transportation and any child-care costs. All focus group participants signed consent forms that confirmed their acknowledgement of research procedures, such as confidentiality, and their agreement to participate.

Focus group members were interviewed to elicit their perspectives and feedback on a variety of issues and topics related to the implementation of Alameda Corps in Year 2. While specific questions were tailored to the distinct role and purview of each audience, general areas covered with the majority of groups were: roles, program goals and purposes, reactions to program components, and program effects.

Focus group sessions were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. Each transcript was analyzed qualitatively to identify relevant themes and topics using the *NVivo* computer program. Findings were then organized into individual reports, ranging in length from 6 to 12 pages. These reports were utilized to elaborate salient issues across groups and pinpoint themes that emerged in a variety of contexts and settings. As much as possible, findings are meant to be descriptive, using ideas and thoughts gleaned directly from participants' statements, rather than from researchers' interpretations. Furthermore, while assertions made about the program often utilize quotes and thoughts from individuals, and therefore may not reflect generally-held views, they have largely been made from the gathering of evidence from a variety of sources, including focus group transcripts, program materials and resources, and meeting notes.

Purpose of Study

While the Qualitative Implementation Substudy (QIS) was in part undertaken as one component of a comprehensive two-year evaluation of the Child-care Retention-Incentive (CRI) programs in the state of California, the study also aimed to provide useful information to parties interested in ECE-related issues nation-wide. The purpose of this report is to provide a portrait of Alameda County's experience in Year 2 of the Corps program from a variety of perspectives, while at the same time serving as a resource to policy-makers and practitioners in other locales seeking to implement similar programs.

This document is offered as a case study of the distinct experience of the ECE community in Alameda County and thus should not be perceived as a blueprint for initiating such programs in another context. Rather, the conclusions and assertions contained herein are intended as an informational tool to assist others as they undertake the process of designing and implementing a program addressing issues of turnover among ECE staff in their particular setting. To this end, we have highlighted strategies and aspects of the program found to be especially effective or successful, as well as noted particular challenges faced and lessons learned along the way.

County Context

A Changing Landscape

A Shifting Economic Context

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. Located within the larger 8-county Bay Area, Alameda County includes urban areas such as Oakland, an older, industrial city with a diverse population and a rich history of innovative early care and education programs, and Fremont, a fast-growing suburban city that hosts the state's largest Taiwanese and Afghani communities, as well as many other immigrant groups.

As a whole the county boasts lower poverty and unemployment rates, more affordable housing costs, and higher average incomes than its neighbor San Francisco, but, given Alameda County's size and diversity, it suffers from many of the same problems. The entire Bay Area was the site of an economic boom in the late 1990's, fueled by burgeoning success in the technology sector. In 2001 the economy began a downturn, and the entire area was mired in recession. In December 2000 Alameda County's unemployment rate was 2.3%; this figure averaged 4.6% in 2001 and had risen to 6.4% in May 2002.^{xii} However, while unemployment was on the rise, costs for basic necessities such as housing, utilities, transportation, and food in the Bay Area continued to increase, by nearly \$8,000 from 1999 to 2001.^{xiii} In 2002, the average median price of a house in Alameda County was \$391,000.^{xiv} A statewide study released in 2001 by the California Budget Project projected the annual amount needed to sustain a family of four in the Bay Area at \$61,600.^{xv} This figure requires that an individual and their spouse both work full-time and earn at least \$14.81 per hour. While the federal poverty level for 2001 was set at \$17,650 for a family of four, critics have charged that the federal formula is outmoded because it does not account for the needs of the present-day family, such as Early Care and Education, which in Alameda County can constitute nearly a third of a low-income family's monthly costs.^{xvi}

Although the downturn of the high-tech sector did not directly affect jobs in the ECE industry, the ramifications of the city's economic problems were evidenced throughout the job market. Moreover, shifts in employment patterns impact the demand for services such as child-care. For example, in 2001 two-thirds of California mothers were working, making obtaining quality child care "the biggest money burden on California families

second only to rent,” according to a study on child welfare as reported in the San Francisco Chronicle.^{xvii} However, at the same time, layoffs may serve to attenuate some families’ need for child care, as one parent may no longer be employed. In other situations, requirements for child-care may have actually increased in the wake of the area’s economic slump, as parents who previously stayed at home must enter the workforce in order to compensate for cuts in spouses’ or partners’ pay. Finally, to the extent that ECE professionals’ family incomes were affected by their spouses/partners’ unemployment, this factor may have had effects on their willingness to stay in low-paying jobs. Thus, changes in the economy may have multiple consequences within a variety of work sectors, having a significant bearing on parents’ decisions about child care, and, to some extent, on ECE workers’ decisions to stay in their jobs.

Children and ECE

Alameda County had the 43rd highest rate of child poverty of the 58 counties in the state. While this rate is good by state standards, overall children in California are more likely to be poor than children nationwide.^{xviii} Furthermore, in the Bay Area, although many counties claim low child poverty rates, there exist large, and mounting, inequities between the area’s richest and poorest children.^{xix}

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.^{xx} On the surface the County would appear to do be doing well in terms of provision of child-care. However, a report by the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network clearly documented, in 2000, that the number of children requiring care still greatly outstripped the availability of licensed care, meeting only 32% of county families’ needs for child care.^{xxi} Another study indicated that, in poor neighborhoods, subsidized care provided higher quality care than non-subsidized centers in working-class communities.^{xxii} However, the study revealed that only 49% of parents in poorer neighborhoods utilized these services, partly because of lack of knowledge about the availability of financial aid, but also on account of long waiting lists and limited space at subsidized centers. Table 1 below provides details on ECE supply information in Alameda County.

Table 1. Alameda county ECE supply information.**Alameda**

Population and number of children, 2000 U.S Census	
Total Population	1,443,741
Number of Children, ages 0-5	119,124
2000 child-care supply information ^{xxiii}	
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 ^{xxiv}	
Center slots per 100 children aged 0-5	18.57
FCC slots per 100 children aged 0-5	18.4

ECE Workforce*Wages and Benefits*

Pertinent surveys of the Alameda County ECE workforce in 2001^{xxv} provide data on the wages and benefits of this population. According to these data:

- Average wages for teachers at centers in the county ranged from a little over \$10 to almost \$15 per hour; family child-care providers reported annual average gross earnings from child-care business ranging from \$30,000 to \$35,000, and 20% of the latter sample did not meet self-sufficiency for Alameda County.
- Among center-based staff, 14-21% were estimated to lack health care coverage and about 55% of all centers surveyed reported contributions to retirement/pension plans for some (not all) employees.

In the context of high costs of living in the Bay Area, current wages for ECE in Alameda County place staff at risk of not being able to meet their basic needs. According to these figures, ECE teachers in the highest income bracket would be able support themselves alone; for those who serve as their families' sole providers, these wages would place them well below the standards set forth by the California Budget Project. Furthermore, the limited benefits offered in the ECE field mean that staff members may need to use their low salaries to fund their own health insurance or retirement savings, or go without.

Education, Career Preparation, Tenure and Longevity

With respect to the educational background of ECE staff, workforce surveys^{xxvi} indicate that 30% of teachers in Alameda county child-care centers have a Bachelor's degree or higher, on average, while the corresponding percentage for family child-care providers is around 14%. Approximately 36% of center-based teachers had less than 24 ECE or child development college units; 60% of all family child-care providers had completed fewer than 12 college units of ECE or child development (or had none).

Turnover rates were around 30% across all non-unionized center-based teachers and 12% in unionized centers. Family child-care providers reported working in the field for an average of 8.7 years, with only 6.5% reporting having worked as a provider for a year or less.

Other Early Care and Education Initiatives

On a local level, the City of Berkeley Taskforce on Child Care Compensation had been recognizing family child care 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 Resource & Referral agencies (BANANAS), along with others, had helped to design this early initiative.

Several quality-enhancement initiatives had been operating within the state as well, but these did not address the compensation issue directly. For example, the federal Child Care and Development Fund permits states to allocate some quality improvement funds to increase compensation and staff development. The Early Childhood Mentor Program, which provides stipends to experienced teachers who help train newer staff, is among the efforts supported by this funding. Other programs provide tuition and Child Development Permit fee reimbursement.

The 2000-2001 Budget Act (California) allocated \$15 million for ECE staff retention programs via Assembly Bill 212 (AB212). This legislation requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to develop guidelines for use by local child-care and development planning councils (LPCs) in creating county plans for the expenditure of these funds.

State Matching Funds Program

First 5 California awarded matching funds to 14 local commissions implementing child-care retention-incentive (CRI) programs, including Alameda County in March 2001. This matching funds program was expanded to a total of 42 counties in fiscal year 2001-2002. These county-led CRI initiatives were intended to directly assist staff in the short-run. And in the long term, the programs are expected to provide a variety of lessons about the effects and costs of alternative policy approaches to the training and professional development, as well as retention of, qualified ECE staff.

Early Care and Education Training System

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

Availability of Courses

In general, many recipients said they were pleased with the availability and quality of courses offered. However, individuals from the educational and training system discussed the demand for more evening classes to accommodate schedules of ECE staff who need access to further training. Furthermore, as many of the core classes fill up quickly, often courses ECE staff members need to fulfill requirements are closed; particular classes mentioned as difficult to access were the Curriculum class and the Supervised Field Experience course. Comments by members of a number of focus groups indicated the need for course offerings geared to family child-care providers and their particular concerns.

Linguistic and Cultural Accessibility

In Year 2, classes were offered in a number of languages other than English. Community college bilingual classes were available in Spanish/English and a local Resource and Referral Agency provided interpreters, representing four different languages, for training activities. However, program staff members identified the need for more such classes and workshops, especially in languages that would serve the needs of the local Afghani and Pakistani populations.

Need for Partnerships

In the first year of the evaluation, instructors from local community colleges and private training organizations discussed the need for more partnerships between community colleges and smaller community-based organizations, so as to more effectively meet the diversity of training and scheduling needs posed by the county's ECE workforce. In the second year of the program, administering staff thought that the Corps program had greatly strengthened communication between agencies, organizations, and institutions providing ECE training in the county, and thus resulting in a somewhat improved system, tailored to the specific needs of the local community. Program administrators agree that articulation between community colleges and four year institutions remains to be developed.

Program History and Design

History of the California CARES Initiative

Several early care and education (ECE) 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 conduct a statewide study of a review of wages and benefits among ECE staff, revealing low pay for most, even among teaching staffs that displayed relatively high education levels.

Aiming to coordinate a response to these new data on wages, in 1997, ECE 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 aims to reward and support both attained as well as continuing education and professional development among ECE staff by providing periodic financial reward in the form of stipends. The CARES model was an outgrowth of both the movements for "living wage" and economic justice, as well as that for professional development within early care and education. Financial reward of past and continuing professional development—as a mechanism to promote staff retention—was the cornerstone of the model.

Subsequently, a number of counties designed programs based on this model, using wage supplements to well-organized professional development activities that encouraged ECE staff to move up the state's Child Development Permit matrix. The ECE 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 eligibility requirements.

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 child-care retention-incentive (CRI) 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, First 5 California (under Proposition 10) had agreed to fund efforts in over 42 California counties to experiment with retention incentives, variably coupled with continuing training requirements. After prolonged campaigning by Assemblywoman Aroner and ECE advocates, Governor Gray Davis eventually signed AB212 effective January 2001 earmarking funds for CRI programs in state-subsidized centers. First 5 California also is supporting evaluations of the original Alameda and San Francisco programs, and the new CRI initiatives 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.

Year 1 of the Alameda Child Development Corps: Successes and Challenges

The first year of the Alameda Child Development Corps generated many important accomplishments. Program staff achieved a number of program goals despite being faced with initiating and implementing the program in a limited time period. Most notably, the process of advocating for the initiative and planning the program brought ECE advocates and administrators, community stakeholders, community college personnel, and policy-makers together to discuss issues facing the ECE field, and in this way garnered support for the program from a wide variety of constituencies. Furthermore, by building on existing training elements in the area of ECE the program developed and coordinated a comprehensive system of professional development for local ECE staff.

Due to a large number of applicants in the initial year, the program had to reduce stipend awards slightly; yet, they maintained their commitment to fund *all* eligible applicants, rather than prioritizing some applicants over others. In Year 1, the Alameda Corps awarded stipends to 2,399 individuals, totaling \$4,093,917.

The Corps was one component of the Every Child Counts, which was Alameda County Children and Families Commission's (currently known as Every Child Counts First 5 Alameda County, henceforth referred to as First 5 Alameda) Proposition 10 strategic plan. Programs funded and implemented under the plan included a range of educational and health services aimed at children aged 0 to 5 and their families. The overall program was designed to promote and improve existing systems to better meet the needs of families living in the county. In the eyes of many, the positioning of the Child Development Corps within such a coordinated effort enhanced the strength and quality of the program and provided it with resources that would have been more difficult to access if the Corps was a stand-alone program.

Year 2

Funding and Advocacy

Local and state monies allocated in Year 2 enabled the Alameda Child Development Corps to expand the stipend program substantially, awarding \$4.2 million to 1,949 applicants. The program continued to be funded through First 5 Alameda; new monies were made available through AB 212, a state bill that allocated funds for retention programs for categorical-funded programs and First 5 California Children and Families Commission (First 5 California) matching funds.

In Year 2, the program continued to promote advocacy for issues related to ECE. In particular, they devoted workshops—offered as part of a required seminar—to the issue, where representatives from local advocacy organizations conducted presentations. In the words of a program staff member, this activity was designed to “encourage people to take stances on legislation” affecting the field. Program staff members were also involved with local organizations and coalitions committed to raising awareness and achieving change around issues related to ECE professionals, and their impact on, and relevance to, quality services for children and families.

Goals for the Program

Stated goals for the program were to improve the ECE services provided to children and families by:

- Building support for early childhood educators
- Creating an incentive for ECE staff members to continue their training and remain in the field
- Establishing a strong network of early childhood professionals
- Encouraging and organizing professional development experiences for early childhood educators

In the evaluation of the first year of the Alameda Child Development Corps program, focus group participants identified a number of problems in the ECE field that they hoped the Corps would address.^{xxvii} Among these were high staff turnover rates, difficulty recruiting quality, trained staff, and low wages. The stated purposes of the program were “to promote leadership development and provide training on program assessment, child emotional and physical health issues, peer counseling on professional development planning, and policy analysis and advocacy.”

In Year 2, focus group participants indicated their understanding of and support for the objectives of the program as they shared their aspirations for the Child Development Corps. A member of the program staff articulated the “original role” of the program: “to get people invested in professional development and then to raise the awareness that they need better compensation and to provide incentives towards those two things.”

Retention was still considered a key program goal by some participants in Year 2 despite the economic downturn. Center directors discussed reasons why staff members were continuing to leave the field. In particular, they cited the class size reduction bill as responsible for staff turnover, as B.A.-level teachers left for the school districts.

Focus group participants also spoke of the potential for the Corps to build networks among staff in the local ECE arena.

Participants referred to the monetary recognition and to incentives for professional development as salient outcomes of the Corps program. One teacher expressed that it was “difficult to work in the field because of the salary,” while other recipients mentioned how stipends provided incentives to become more educated and advance in their careers. Another addressed the role that the program played in making participants feel valued and recognized; such recognition is especially important in the current climate, where ECE staff are often viewed as “babysitters.” One recipient claimed: “[the stipend] makes me know they think I am important.” While the Corps was not conceptualized as the single intervention to address these issues, the sentiments expressed by focus group members reinforces one of its major goals: to draw attention to the low compensation and status of ECE staff.

In addition, some focus group participants voiced the expectation that the program would improve the quality of care provided. In defining success for the program, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members hoped that the program would not only affect turnover and retention, but also increase and strengthen the quality of care offered through local programs. Community stakeholders agreed that their primary goal for the program was to “improve the quality of care and options for parents.”

County Commissioners championed programmatic goals similar to those elaborated above: improving compensation, retention, and training. Some addressed aims related to education and advocacy, such as “keeping the early childhood community in the county abreast of relevant legislation, developments, new research, and practices in the field.”

Program Design

Eligibility

As in the first year of the program, in Year 2, the Child Development Corps was open to teachers and program directors in center-based and family child care, as well as license-exempt providers. To join the Corps in Year 2, an individual was required to have:

- Worked as an early childhood educator (in a center or family child-care home, or as a license-except provider) with children aged birth to five;
- Worked at least half-time (20 hours per week) in the same ECE program in Alameda County for at least nine months prior to July 1, 2001; and
- Completed a minimum of 12 units of Early Childhood Education.

Similar to the state CARES model, eligibility for particular stipend amounts was based on education levels. These stipend levels and tiers paralleled the requirements for California’s Child Development Permit, the state’s early education credential required for employment at some publicly funded centers. The basic eligibility criteria for the Alameda Child Development Corps are detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Alameda Child Development Corps Stipend Levels in Year 2**Alameda Child Development Corps: Year 2 Stipend Levels**

<i>Level 1</i>		
Tier 1	Associate Teacher (12 ECE units)	\$500
Tier 2	Associate Teacher (18 ECE units)	\$750
Tier 3	Associate Teacher (24 ECE units)	\$1,000
Tier 4	Associate Teacher (24 ECE units + 8 GE units)	\$1,250
<i>Level 2</i>		
Tier 1	Teacher (24 ECE units + 16 GE units)	\$1,500
Tier 2	Master Teacher (AA with 24 ECE units, 6 units administration, 2 units adult supervision)	\$2,500
Tier 3	Program Director (BA with 24 units ECE, 6 units administration, 2 units adult supervision)	\$6,000
<i>Additional Stipends</i>		
Language	Fluent in at least one language in addition to English; use it on the job	\$325
Graduate	Possess Master's or graduate degree	\$325

Continuing Eligibility

In order to encourage professional growth among participants, the program upheld rigorous training requirements for recipients to achieve continuing eligibility for stipends. After the first year, to continue to receive a stipend at the same level in subsequent years, staff was required to:

- 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 home 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.

Community Input

The program made notable efforts to elicit input from as many sectors of the ECE community as possible. In the eyes of program staff, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) provided a vehicle for “stay[ing] in touch with recipients,” as it was comprised of representatives from constituencies participating in the program, such as family child-care providers, center-based teachers, and center directors. Members of local colleges and the Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R) Agencies participated as advisors to the TAC.

Other links to the ECE community were offered via the Corps’ systems support structure, composed of individuals housed at local R&R Agencies (Career Advocates) and within the community college system (Professional Development Coordinators) who were in part responsible for supporting, assisting, and advising recipients during the application process and throughout their participation in the program. Program staff’s interaction and communication with these individuals, who possessed a unique perspective regarding participants’ needs, allowed for heightened collaboration between implementers of the program and the local training system, so as to better meet the needs of stipend recipients. Corps program staff felt they benefited from the work of Career Advocates and Professional Development Coordinators who created awareness among the ECE community of the importance of professional growth and systemic change in the field.

Evaluation and Indicators of Effectiveness

In Year 2 as in Year 1, the Alameda Child Development Corps includes evaluation components to ascertain the effectiveness of the program. This QIS study represents one piece of the larger evaluation of the progress and effects of the Corps. In addition to the focus groups aimed at obtaining qualitative information about program implementation, PACE is collecting quantitative data to assess the impact of the program on retention and training/professional development of recipients.^{xxviii} The program also gathers data on participant characteristics and participation in professional growth activities, and conducts an internal evaluation.

In the focus groups and interviews, the majority of responses regarding the evaluation efforts were provided by individuals who were involved in the program in administrative or supervisory roles, such as funders and members of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Participants identified a range of issues and information they hoped the evaluation would document, both quantitatively as well as qualitatively.

First 5 Commissioners were interested in implementation issues—“the way it’s run”—as well as whether the goals of the program were realized. More specifically, members of this group detailed the need to gather information on the effectiveness of the strategies used for recruitment and retention of ECE staff. Some cited specific measures, such as ECERS scores (an evaluation of early care environments), that could be utilized to assess the impact of the program on the quality of care offered locally. TAC members referenced the need to examine the utilization of other programs associated with the Corps—a specific one mentioned provided funds to centers to upgrade their facilities—as indicators of the program’s effectiveness.

Some commissioners expressed their hope that the evaluation would provide feedback regarding recipients' impressions of and satisfaction with the program. One explained the importance of obtaining these ground-level perspectives from the field: "It doesn't matter if we think it's great if the child-care workers think it's terrible, or it makes them feel undervalued, and [the program makes it] more difficult for them to do their work."

Table 3 below provides demographic details of stipend recipients in Year 2 of Alameda Corps.

Table 3. Alameda Child Development Corps Stipend Recipients Year 2: Background, Employment, & Stipend Information by Type (Center-Based & Family Child-Care).^{xxx, xxix,}

	<i>Center-Based (n=1,755)</i>	<i>FCC (n=124)</i>	<i>Total (n=1,882)*</i>
Education			
Up to High School/GED	3%	0%	3%
Some College	31%	36%	31%
AA (2 year College)	22%	26%	22%
BA/BS (4 year College)	18%	19%	18%
BA +Some Graduate School	24%	16%	23%
Race/Ethnicity			
African American/Black	27%	39%	28%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1%	0%	1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	17%	7%	16%
Latino	16%	14%	16%
White	32%	30%	32%
Multi-Ethnic	5%	10%	5%
Other	2%	0%	2%
Number of years in job			
0 - 2 years	31%	23%	30%
3 - 8 years	36%	43%	36%
9 - 15 years	18%	18%	19%
16+ years	14%	13%	14%
Number of years in job			
0 - 2 years	31%	23%	30%
3 - 8 years	36%	43%	36%
9 - 15 years	18%	18%	19%
16+ years	14%	13%	14%
Annual Salary			
Below \$10,000	2%	8%	2%
\$10,000 – 20,000	30%	29%	29%
\$20,001 - \$30,000	39%	23%	37%
\$30,001 - \$40,000	17%	11%	16%
\$40,001 - \$50,000	7%	9%	7%
\$50,001 +	4%	4%	4%
Stipend Awards			
Total number of stipends awarded	1,755	124	1,882
Total stipend amount distributed	\$3,835,875.00	\$243,575.00	\$4,087,850.00
Average amount distributed	\$2,185.68	\$1,964.31	\$2,172.08

**Includes 3 participants of unknown care type; data from Matching Funds Evaluation County Administrative Data – represents data from all stipend recipients who consented to release their data for research, this number is fewer than all individuals who received a stipend in Year 2.*

Program Structure and Implementation

This section presents focus group participants' perspectives on the structure and implementation of the Alameda Child Development Corps program in its second year. Included are opinions and experiences of a variety of constituencies and stakeholders described in the methodology section of this implementation study.

Home Agency

The Corps program was administered and implemented by Every Child Counts First 5 Alameda. The groups planning and developing the Corps program agreed that this role would be the most effective.. The program maintained a conflict of interest policy to avoid allegations of preferential treatment; this measure was particularly important for members of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), as its membership was comprised of potential recipients.

Program Staffing

In Year 2, the program employed two full-time staff members and one part-time. In addition, 27 Corps Enrollment Specialists were contracted for limited hours to assist individuals during the application period, helping applicants complete the application packet, as well as educating them regarding continuing eligibility requirements and related program information. Every Child Counts contracted services with the R&Rs and colleges to conduct a wide range of advisory, training, and advocacy work, including assistance with the Corps outreach and application system. During the application period, temporary staff was hired to complete data entry.

Staffing Challenges

The primary obstacles posed to staff involved the sizeable amount of work involved in implementing this program in a county as large as Alameda. In Year 2, staff regularly clocked 10-hour days and often worked weekends. "Normal" mailings numbered over 2,000, which necessitated recruiting staff from other departments to help out during peak mailing times. Furthermore, fielding and responding to daily phone and email queries—sometimes up to 30 or 40 a day—from such a large pool of potential applicants was overwhelming. Program staff articulated that programs such as the Corps need a "renaissance person," someone who possessed a child development or education background, as well as program management and administrative skills.

Background and Qualifications

Staff thought it was important for personnel to possess strong interpersonal and communication skills, as well as be able to network and facilitate groups. They identified certain areas of expertise as useful: knowledge of the classroom, the ECE delivery system, the local ECE community, and the broader political environment. In addition they thought that potential staff members should have an understanding of the profession and relevant issues: "the low pay [and] ... the lack of ... centers to meet ... capacity." In their words, it was helpful for people to have "been in the trenches for a little while," to possess work experience as practitioners in the field.

Program staff outlined different levels of tasks and responsibilities associated with the program. While they needed some staff “at higher levels who can handle the trainings and the setup of different events,” there was also a demand for “lower-level people who can do a lot of the logistical work like collating and copying, and preparing mailings, and stuff like that.”

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

The TAC was convened in the first year of the program to elicit the perspectives of the ECE community countywide. In the first year, TAC members were involved in program planning, and they continued to help shape policy in Year 2. The TAC met once or twice a month for a three-month time period.

Recruitment and Composition

TAC members were recruited onto the committee through their involvement in the ECE field. Members participating in the focus group were involved with the California Early Childhood Mentor Program or other professional organizations. The committee was strategically selected to reflect the composition of the Alameda Child Development Corps and was comprised of family child-care providers, teachers in a variety of types of ECE programs, and center directors.

Role

The purpose of the TAC was to make decisions and recommend policy for the implementation of the Alameda Child Development Corps and to provide guidance to program staff from the perspective of recipients. While the Commission had the ultimate authority in decision-making, staff referred issues to the TAC for recommendation. Staff was especially cognizant of their potential to influence the TAC, and thus strove to maintain neutrality.

The TAC utilized a consensus decision-making process to make recommendations to program staff and the Commission. Program staff provided some background on the issues to be discussed and committee members thought that everyone had the opportunity to share their perspectives.

Outreach and Recruitment

In Year 2, Alameda Child Development Corps staff utilized a number of strategies to inform the local ECE community about the program. In addition to information from mailings and other types of printed outreach materials, many recipients recounted how they learned about the program at a community college class, or in a meeting with a Corps Advocate. The support structure in place at local training agencies and educational institutions greatly facilitated the expansion of dissemination efforts. In particular, staff members thought that having the career advocates at Resource & Referral Agencies, and the professional development coordinators at community colleges, had contributed to the enhancement of outreach to a variety of populations.

The Corps Enrollment Specialists (CES) commented that, in their view, outreach in Year 2 was more organized and structured than in the initial year. For example, Corps Enrollment Specialists instituted regular schedules, with set hours and days, for meeting with applicants and making phone calls. Further, office hours were held at a local Resource & Referral Agency (referred to as “BANANAS’ nights” after the name of the organization) to provide assistance during the application process. These strategies contributed to greater systematization of outreach efforts and improved consistency in terms of the information offered to applicants. Many of the CES identified their extensive experience as administrators in the ECE field as an asset in conducting outreach for the program. Furthermore, they thought that the ability to identify with stipend applicants was useful and provided them with a greater understanding of the challenges faced by potential recipients.

While many praised the variety of strategies utilized to inform ECE staffing the county and recruit potential applicants, focus group participants from a variety of constituencies, from program administrators to recipients, identified a need to conduct more outreach in specific communities, particularly among non-English speaking populations. They commented on improvements made in providing information and assistance—through the expansion of advisors and staff—to Spanish and Chinese-speaking ECE staff, yet some mentioned the large Afghan community in the nearby Fremont area as not being sufficiently included. Community stakeholders emphasized the need to translate more materials into other languages and simplify requirements so as to make them easier to understand.

In addition to detailing the need for increased communication with diverse language communities, many also identified family child-care providers as a group requiring more targeted outreach efforts. TAC members noted the need to improve outreach efforts to *small* family child-care facilities and center-based staff who may not be receiving information through their director.

Application Process

The general consensus, among teachers and center directors alike, was that the Year 2 application was much easier to understand and complete than in the first year. Many returning recipients attributed this to the fact that they had their documents in place from Year 1. Returning recipients described the process as “simple” and “clear.” However, others thought that the signatures required for documentation were time-consuming and placed additional, and undue, demands on applicants.

Focus group participants described the multiple forms of support available to applicants. Many praised the Career Advocates at the Resource & Referral Agencies for the assistance they provided during the application process. In the words of the Corps Program Coordinator: “They were right there if I had any questions. I can’t express what a great success they were in reviewing the applications.” In addition to advice available through the professional development and training system, Corps Advisors, who acted as consultants and were located all over the county, offered support for applicants as they

navigated the application process. Furthermore, center directors detailed their role in providing information to staff members regarding the application.

While most recipients described the application process positively, some recipients from family child-care homes thought that the process could be “streamlined.” Others detailed instances of receiving inconsistent information from Corps Advisors and suggested that the program “make sure the Advisors are on the same wavelength.”

Eligibility Requirements and Stipend Levels

In the second year of the program, eligibility levels continued to follow the California Child Development Permit Matrix. In contrast to Year 1, when stipends were lower than expected, in Year 2 most everyone thought the range of stipends was adequate, and were satisfied with the amount they received. However, center directors agreed that stipend amounts “couldn’t be too high,” as ECE professionals’ wages were so low. Some suggested adding a level between 12 and 24 credits, as well as one between Site Supervisor and Master Teacher, to provide more easily attainable increases.

In general, recipients were supportive of the requirements, although some thought that exceptions should be made for people who experienced hardships that prevented them from completing certain eligibility preconditions. On the other hand, program staff considered the strict requirements for the Corps as an indication of the program’s commitment and seriousness to the Commission’s goals. They viewed the task of administering program funds seriously and strove to convey this importance to potential recipients.

Some recipients voiced their opinion that experience in the ECE field should “count for something.” They particularly criticized the nine-month continuous employment stipulation as punitive against those who have been in the field for many years, but starting a new job at the time of application. In addition, some in the field noted that a continuing concern for ECE staff is the lack of recognition given to experience in the field, as many Corps members think they should receive credit for work experience and “life experiences,” in addition to awards for formal education. On the other hand, Corps program staff and other planners expressed a desire to retain the original goal of the Corps, which was based on research that shows the correlation between quality of early care and level of formal education of ECE staff.

Language Stipend

As in Year 1, the program continued to recognize teachers who regularly and fluently used a language in addition to English in their work with children and their families. Focus group participants largely endorsed the rationale guiding the awarding of additional stipends for ECE staff speaking a second language in their daily work. Returning recipients expressed their overwhelming support for the stipend, sharing their belief that it was a good idea, particularly given the diversity of the local population. One participant stated that it was important to “be able to communicate with both parents and

children ... [and] have a good rapport with them.” Others emphasized that having bilingual staff members helped “ease the transition between the home and the school” for children from families speaking languages other than English.

While recipients generally supported the language stipends, there was some confusion around the requirements for receiving the award. In particular, some were unsure if staff was still eligible if the only child speaking the second language left the classroom; others detailed instances of eligible caregivers not receiving the stipend or of non-eligible recipients receiving one. Many remarked that the rules guiding the language stipend should be clarified.

Graduate Degree Stipend

Most recipients thought that awarding stipends to individuals with graduate degrees was valid, especially considering the additional effort attaining a degree entailed. Participants in one focus group noted the importance of having highly educated staff: “the more education, the better the center.”

Although the majority of participants also considered the amounts provided for the graduate stipend as reasonable, some thought the stipends should be larger, so as to reflect the cost of obtaining the degree. One recipient dissented with the group’s opinion regarding the stipend altogether, expressing her feeling that, because staff with Master’s degrees were “not making pennies,” they should not receive extra monies.

Stipend Award and Distribution

The majority of recipients reported that they received their stipends in a timely manner. Several noted misunderstandings that arose due to the tax liability on the stipends. Two focus group participants cited having to pay taxes on the stipends as a reason they were not reapplying for the program. Many stated that the stipend should be non-taxable (the tax code prohibits such a practice in the stipend system).

Recipients used their stipend award for a variety of purposes, from professional to personal. While some invested the money in equipment and materials for their center, others spent the award taking vacations, or for home improvement projects. Some said that they applied the money toward educational purposes, either to cover the costs of classes for themselves or to pay for their children’s tuition.

Appeals

If applicants thought that there was a mistake or oversight made in the determination of their eligibility or level, they could submit a formal appeal to a special committee appointed by the Technical Advisory Committee. The Appeals’ Committee is composed of three members: one TAC member, one representative of an ECE professional organization, and one Professional Growth Advisor. The Corps staff praised the Appeals Committee, stating that while they were pleased that the process provided applicants with an outlet for contesting decisions, “it’s an added load” to process and refer claims, as well

as field calls from applicants awaiting decisions, who were often upset. Staff speculated that the process may pose difficulties for individuals who “have trouble communicating in English” as “it’s tougher for them to write out exactly what they’re appealing and how they’re appealing it,” as well as more burdensome for them to obtain appropriate documentation.

Continuing Eligibility Requirements

As mentioned previously, in order to maintain eligibility for the program, recipients needed to comply with certain eligibility requirements. These mandates included attending meetings, participating in professional development activities, such as trainings and classes, and applying for a Child Development Permit.

Although some recipients considered the requirements for continuing eligibility to be “comprehensive,” many recipients described the stipulations as “stringent,” and compared them to those in other counties where many fewer units were required. In general, recipients agreed that the requirements provided an incentive for making progress towards educational goals. Some expressed their approval of the Clifford-Harms training and assessment, stating that it was valuable because: “it makes you look ... at your program and what you don’t have ... [and] identifies things in the classroom that could be improved.” However, others wished that the training could be pared down a little so it was not so time consuming.

TAC members mentioned that some of the Corps members felt overwhelmed by the requirements imposed in the second year. In the words of one TAC member: “it seemed like there was so much that they had to accomplish, that it scared some people.”

Lessons Learned

The feedback provided by focus group participants provided valuable insights into what was effective in various program areas, and offered useful information about strategies and procedures that were less successful. Following are some suggestions gleaned from the experiences of implementing the Alameda Child Development Corps during Year 2 that may be helpful to others interested in implementing a similar program.

Planning and implementation

- Place the program within the funding agency; this may avoid an additional layer of bureaucracy imposed by sub-contracting to another agency.
- Elicit input from as many constituencies as possible during the planning process, particularly those representing ECE professionals. Continue to seek on-going feedback and incorporate perspectives from a variety of groups during the implementation of the program, through strategies such as establishing an advisory group.
- Hire staff people who have a background in child development and are familiar with local and larger ECE field. It is helpful for personnel to be politically astute, as well as possess experience “in the trenches” as ECE practitioners.

Outreach, recruitment, and technical support

- Make use of a variety of outreach strategies and media (such as newspapers, mailings, television ads, meeting presentations, and posters and flyers) in order to reach as many communities and constituencies as possible.
- Utilize resources offered within existing system of training and professional development; for example, local Resource and Referral agencies can provide excellent locations for application workshops. Furthermore, collaborating with such organizations will avoid duplication of services and expand dissemination efforts.
- Employ individuals currently working in the field as consultants and advisors for the program, to provide technical assistance to applicants during the application process; in Alameda, Professional Development Coordinators and Career Advisors were positioned within extant structures of support and training, such as Resource & Referral Agencies and the community college system, which facilitated communication with potential applicants and recipients.
- Ensure that the training offered to consultants and advisors is thorough and consistent, so as to avoid the spread of misinformation and confusion; training should also include a component that covers “people skills,” to help advisors provide the most helpful and constructive consultations possible.

Eligibility, stipends, and appeals

- Present requirements in a clear and readable format; offer a variety of opportunities and outlets for potential applicants to receive clarification.
- Note that graduate degree stipends are seen as a way of rewarding education, but also may be resented by some staff members, who view them as valuing education over experience.
- Outline and reiterate continuing eligibility requirements clearly throughout the year for recipients to understand and fulfill them.
- Include a procedure for applicants to contest decisions made regarding eligibility and stipend levels.
- Inform recipients repeatedly that stipends will be taxed.

Perceptions of Program Effects

During the focus groups, participants provided input on specific components of the implementation of the Alameda Child Development Corps program in its second year, and also commented upon the significance of the Alameda Corps program in their individual lives and the local ECE setting. They speculated on the progress they thought the program had made towards addressing larger issues in the field. They addressed program effects in various dimensions, from the recognition of recipients and fostering of professional linkages to the improvement of quality of care and promotion of advocacy. Although presented separately below for ease of exposition, these program effects are interrelated. For instance, efforts to encourage networking among ECE staff can also assist in achieving goals related to advocacy; similarly, increasing access to professional development can foster relationships and build solidarity among ECE professionals, while improving the quality of care offered to children. This discussion of the program's impact is not intended to convey assertions of causality, but rather, individuals' *impressions* of program effects. They are offered as multiple perspectives on the role of the Corps program in this community of ECE professionals.

Recognition

In describing the various ways that the program has affected the local ECE community, focus group participants emphasized the professional and personal benefits recipients experienced from their participation. In particular, many spoke of the important role of the program in recognizing and validating the profession. One director noted that “more than receiving money,” the program has made people “feel good about . . . [the] work.” An individual participating in the community stakeholder group supported this sentiment: “It has had an amazing effect on staff—they are taking classes and feeling better about their work.”

Many participants' visions of themselves appear to have expanded with membership in the Corps; for example, some commented that their involvement in the program had contributed to the enhancement of their self-esteem. One director shared her thoughts in this regard: “I am more confident because I've got this amazing thing (the Corps) behind me.”

Professional Networks and Linkages

Participants highlighted that they had built relationships with other ECE professionals through their participation in the Corps program. For example, center directors thought that the program had served to unify participants, giving them a collective “voice.” In the words of one center director, “as teachers we are part of something called the Corps and it brings us all together. [Before,] we were all separated individuals at different places.” Recipients agreed that their participation in the Corps made them, and others, feel part of a professional community, and assisted in the development of interpersonal relationships among ECE staff. Participants observed that staff members within centers seem to be more motivated and “are getting along together better.”

Some focus group participants identified the seminars organized by program staff as contributing to fostering connections among staff. One director described how she was energized by the atmosphere at the seminar, while another commented that the seminars were valuable in bringing together “a large group of people who care about children.”

Family child-care providers also shared their sense that, since the inception of the program, more caregivers were joining provider associations. They described their participation in such formalized networks as providing them with a source of support, as well as access to information on relevant issues, such as obtaining employment benefits and health care coverage. Others in the field corroborated these accounts. A Commissioner asserted that the program had helped combat the isolation usually characterizing the experience of family child-care providers: “the Corps has made major strides in making them feel included in what is going on in the county.”

Training and Professional Development

Professional development was an essential component of Alameda’s program. Continuing eligibility requirements involved recipients in several activities aimed at enhancing their professional knowledge and helping them achieve educational goals. Focus group participants addressed the role that the Corps was playing in cultivating professionalism in the field. For example, community stakeholders noted that “many providers are now enrolling in classes. A lot of people who have never taken classes before are, and the message to take classes has totally changed.” One stakeholder described the professional development effort as a “stunning success.”

Recipients echoed praise for training efforts. As one individual stated: “Part of the attraction of the Corps is that you are being educated, you are working towards being a professional.” Others shared that completing the educational requirements has transformed the way they view themselves and their careers. Recipients thought that the program succeeded in encouraging participants to grow professionally, commenting that colleagues “are considering themselves to be professionals now.”

Another product of the program related to professional development involved the system established to address recipients’ training needs. A number of focus group participants, particularly program staff members, reflected on the ways in which the program had significantly fostered and strengthened communication between agencies, organizations, and institutions providing ECE training in the county. They thought that, because of the Corps, local educational institutions were beginning to address the concerns of the ECE community and instituting changes, such as adding more classes, which resulted in better training, tailored to the specific needs of the local community.

Among a number of focus group participants, there was the perception that enrollment in early childhood development classes in the local community college system had increased since the inception of the program. Some recipients reported that early childhood education classes were often filled, and attributed this to the Corps. One

recipient provided an account of a class with 41 enrolled students: “and that never would have been if they had not put the Corps in action.” Specific enrollment information is included in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Training and Professional Development in Alameda County

	Number of courses offered at community colleges^{xxxii} (enrollment)	Number of workshops and trainings offered at community-based organizations (enrollment)
Summer 1999-Spring 2000	217 (6,313)	n/a
Summer 2000-Spring 2001	257 (7,516)	40 (577)
Summer 2001-Spring 2002 ^{xxxiii}	252 (6,370)	62 (1,312)

Although the total number of classes offered at community colleges decreased from 2000 to 2002 (this could be due in part to the data missing from Las Positas), the numbers of courses available have increased since the inception of the program in Year 1. Furthermore, the surge in enrollment in 2000-‘01 may reflect the greater demand among Year 1 recipients who needed to take ECE or GE coursework in order to fulfill eligibility requirements; in Year 2, many Corps members could complete their requirements by enrolling in workshops or trainings offered at community-based organizations.

Retention

Most recipients participating in the focus group shared their plans to remain in the ECE field; some also expressed their desire to become mentors, while others revealed their future plans to open their own centers. Even those who indicated that they might leave the field avowed their commitment to continue working with children.

For many focus group participants, the program’s impact on retention and turnover would be a primary indicator of its success. Many thought that the program could serve to mitigate turnover, through the fostering of relationships among Corps members and the creation of a more positive and motivating work environment.

Stakeholders appraised the program as particularly successful in addressing the problem of retention among center directors, a group they viewed as integral to the promotion of opportunities for mentoring in the field. One focus group participant mentioned the “Then & Now study”^{xxxiii} that identified directors as a major influence on quality of care provided and retention of staff. In the words of one participant, “one of the main factors that keeps people in their jobs is their director.”

Quality of Care

Many recipients professed positive changes caregiving at their centers, and attributed this improvement to the Corps. A number of recipients detailed how their enrollment in

courses and participation in program activities influenced their own and their colleagues' perceptions and work with children. For example, some spoke of being more conscious of individual differences among children and learning how to create curricula and tailor instruction to match developmental stages (referring to the philosophy of developmentally appropriate practices in ECE). One participant described the ways enrolling in classes has affected her work with children: "I've raised a lot of children and [the classes] ... taught me what I didn't know ... I am learning that there is a better way. I am learning about child development and the different stages of learning at age one, age one-and-a-half..."

In addition, recipients noted that co-workers were applying knowledge gained at trainings and workshops to their work in the classroom. In particular, some Corps members identified the ECERS training (an assessment of early childhood environments) as beneficial, in that it provided participants with the "tools" to "see what changes needed to be made" in their classrooms. One recipient shared her experience: "And I didn't have to come in and say 'You know maybe we should do this.' They were actually able to see that on their own because they were ... [using] the tools themselves."

The Importance of Advocacy

While the Alameda Child Development Corps was primarily focused on the goals of reducing turnover and improving ECE quality, many focus group participants also highlighted the importance of building an advocacy agenda into the program. For example, included in the variety of goals that TAC members articulated for the program was the dissemination of information to parents so as to enhance advocacy efforts. They believed that increasing local awareness about the program could enable the expansion of funding beyond First 5 resources and thus ensure sustained financial support of the program.

Stakeholders expressed their objective that Corps members would serve as an "advocacy base" for achieving long-term goals, such as restructuring the compensation scale in ECE and making progress towards the state-wide goal of school readiness. Center directors thought that outreach efforts should extend beyond the child development community to include other sectors of the population. They hoped that the building of public support could contribute to the development of new funding options.

The Future of the Corps: Sustainability

From focus group data, there was an overall impression that the Alameda County Child Development Corps had a number of positive effects in the local ECE arena, despite some indications of flaws in implementation or areas needing improvement. However, interspersed amid these discussions of positive program effects, questions were raised regarding the future of the program and its continued sustainability. The issue of funding was a particularly salient one for County Commissioners; while they were hopeful that the program would continue to improve the field, they also expressed ambivalence about the use of First 5 monies as a funding source. At the same time they described First 5 dollars as "right now ... the biggest and best way ... to fund these initiatives," they acknowledged their temporary nature, and emphasized the need for broader and more systemic changes in order to genuinely affect compensation for ECE professionals.

Another Commissioner questioned the overall impact of the stipend: “I think it’s wonderful that we have an opportunity to do something with [First 5], but it’s obviously not enough. It’s just an incentive ... giving somebody \$5,000 more when they are making \$17,000 [means] they are only making \$22,000.” Although funders were satisfied with initial indicators of program effects, they did not view the Corps as the definitive, or only, strategy to address issues of retention and quality. One Commissioner expressed her long-range goal that the program would “become obsolete” because there would be a “well-funded and equitable system of early childhood in this country ... [and] a program such as the Corps would not be necessary.”

Conclusions: Findings and Implications

In closing, this section summarizes the salient findings from this study of various stakeholders’ perspectives on the implementation of the Alameda Child Development Corps program in Year 2. In particular, it points to the role of this program in the local ECE community and implications for promoting retention, professional development, and professional recognition.

Year 2 stipend recipients in Alameda were, on the whole, satisfied with the application and stipend disbursement processes, and with the level of support received from program staff. There were some controversies around eligibility requirements and stipend levels, especially around awards based on bilingual skills and on level of graduate education. Focus group participants drew attention to the need for further support (in terms of materials and personnel) for members of various minority language communities.

Among themes emerging from focus group data on the Alameda Corps program in Year 2, a strong and recurring one was that ECE professionals are underpaid and undervalued, and that programs such as the Corps may help to address this lack of monetary and professional recognition. However, it was also apparent from focus group feedback that although the Corps supplied needed support and acknowledgement to ECE professionals, it could not be relied upon as the sole, or sustained, solution to the more pervasive problem of low wages in the field. While most recipients regarded the program positively, few stated that the stipend was the factor keeping them in the field.

A component that distinguished Alameda County’s program model from many other retention-incentive programs was its emphasis on professional development. Although most retention-incentive models offer inducements for training as a key element of the program, Alameda County provides one of the more rigorous sets of requirements for continuing eligibility. While some focus group participants complained about these stipulations, most praised the program for setting high standards for the ECE field. They believed that some criteria, such as mandating Child Development Permits and specialized assessment training, contributed to the improvement of ECE quality. Data indicate that the structure and support provided to recipients for continuing their

education was seen as one of the crucial ingredients of the Alameda Child Development Corps program and likely to contribute to its effectiveness in strengthening ECE quality.

The Corps program's support for continued professional development; the recognition, professional linkages, and sense of unity conferred through participation; and the extra compensation from the stipend award may have all served to enhance recipients' satisfaction as professionals. However, many of the recipients' reports suggested that they were deeply committed to remaining in the field of ECE; some expressed that they would never leave. It is difficult to determine how heavily the stipend figured into the career decisions of such dedicated individuals. Furthermore, in assessing the effect of the stipends on turnover, disentangling the components of the program to identify one factor that may solve the retention problem may not be possible. As this study revealed, the Alameda Corps program signified multiple, and interrelated, processes and effects on the lives of individual recipients and within the local ECE community.

This study of the Alameda Corps program highlighted participants' view that retention-incentive programs need to be implemented within a larger system of support and advocacy for the field, which includes raising public awareness of issues facing the ECE workforce, expanding local opportunities for professional development, and exerting pressure on policymakers for sustained funding to augment ECE staff salaries.

The need for quality early care and education, and the demand for qualified and well-trained ECE staff do not seem likely to wane soon. Recent federal changes in welfare legislation mandating longer work hours for recipients and the continued participation of parents in the workforce across all socioeconomic levels will make the staffing problem more acute in the years to come. Regardless of shifts in the economy that serve to affect employment patterns in myriad ways, nationwide, parents and families will persist in their need for a range of child-care arrangements for their children, the provision of which will depend largely on the field's ability to attract and retain ECE staff. While the Corps model is by no means the *only* way to address the problems facing the field, such as retention and quality, it certainly is one method, particularly when leveraged with other types of retention and training programs and initiatives.

Appendix: Descriptions of focus group participantsYear 2 Focus Group Participants

Funders	Key players involved with developing the program design and identifying program funding such as officers of the California First 5 Children and Families Commission and the Alameda County First 5 Commission.
Community Stakeholders	Representatives from local Resource and Referral agencies (R&Rs), school districts and other local government and child-care agencies
Corps Advisors	Individuals currently working in the ECE field who volunteer to assist child-care professionals as they enroll in the Corps. They are trained by Corps staff and receive a small stipend for their work during the enrollment period.
Career Advocates & Professional Growth Advisors	Individuals within community colleges or R&R agencies who provided consultation and advice regarding professional growth plans and compliance with continuing eligibility requirements
Program Staff	Alameda Child Development Corps staff responsible for implementing the program
Program Participants	Stipend recipients, grouped by level and/or licensing type (center, FCC, exempt)
Technical Advisory Committee	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

ⁱ Burchinal, M. R. (1999). Child care experiences and developmental outcomes. *The Annals of the American Academy*, 563, 73-97.

ⁱⁱ Shonkoff & Philips (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

ⁱⁱⁱ NICHD Early Child Care Research Network. (2000). Characteristics and quality of child care for toddlers and preschoolers. *Applied Developmental Sciences*, 4, 116-135.

-
- ^{iv} Cryer, D., Hurwitz, S., & Wolery, M. (2001). Continuity of caregivers for infants and toddlers in center-based child-care: Report on a survey of center practices. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 15, 497-514.
- ^v Whitebook, M. & Bellm, D. (1999). *Taking on Turnover: An Action Guide for Child Care Center Teachers and Directors*. Washington, DC: Center for the Child Care Workforce.
- ^{vi} CQO Study Team. (1995). *Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers, Technical report*. University of Colorado at Denver.
- ^{vii} Center for the Child Care Workforce (2001). *Current data on child care salaries and benefits in the United States*. Washington, DC.
- ^{viii} Whitebook, M., Sakai, L., Gerber, E., Howes, C. (2001) *Then & Now: Changes in Child Care Staffing, 1994-2000*. Center for the Child Care Workforce. Available: <http://www.ccw.org/pubs/Then&Nowfull.pdf>
- ^{ix} Whitebook, M., Howes, C., & Phillips, D. (1998). *Worthy Work, Unlivable Wages; The National Child Care Staffing Study*. Washington, DC: Center for the Child Care Workforce.
- ^x U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2002). 2001 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor.
- ^{xi} See Appendix for detailed description of focus group participants.
- ^{xii} California Employment Development Department (2002), Labor Force and Unemployment Data. State of California: Employment Development Department. Available: <http://www.calmis.ca.gov/htmlfile/subject/lftable.htm>.
- ^{xiii} California Budget Project (2001). *Making Ends Meet: How Much Does It Cost to Raise a Family in California?* Available: <http://www.cbp.org/2001/r0109mem.htm>
- ^{xiv} *Cost of Bay Area homes still rising*, San Francisco Chronicle, June 25, 2002.
- ^{xv} California Budget Project. (2001).
- ^{xvi} California Child Care Resource and Referral Network (2001). *The 2001 California Child Care Portfolio*. Available: <http://www.rnetwork.org/calchildcare/onramp/article.php?ID=624>
- ^{xvii} *Study cites divide for rich, poor kids: Big inequities seen in Bay Area*, San Francisco Chronicle, November 28, 2001.
- ^{xviii} The national average child poverty rate is 19.5%; California's average is 16.5%. Source: Children Now (2001). *California Report Card 2001*. Oakland, CA. Available: <http://www.childrennow.org/california/rc-2001/reportcard-2001.htm>
- ^{xix} *Study cites divide for rich, poor kids: Big inequities seen in Bay Area* San Francisco Chronicle, November 28, 2001
- ^{xx} California Child Care Resource and Referral Network (2001). *The 2001 California Child Care Portfolio*. Available: <http://www.rnetwork.org/calchildcare/onramp/article.php?ID=624>
- ^{xxi} Ibid.
- ^{xxii} *Preschool and Child-Care Quality in California Neighborhoods: Policy Success, Remaining Gaps*, PACE Working Paper Series 01-3, August 2001
- ^{xxiii} Ibid
- ^{xxiv} Child Care Indicators 1998, Part II. PACE and the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network.
- ^{xxv} Center for the Child Care Workforce (2003). *A Profile of the Alameda Child Care Center Workforce, 2001* Available: <http://www.rnetwork.ezpublishing.com/rnet/uploads/1052779966.pdf> and Center for the Child Care Workforce (2003). *Family Child Care Providers and Assistants in Alameda County, 2001*. Available: <http://www.rnetwork.ezpublishing.com/rnet/uploads/1052777613.pdf>
- ^{xxvi} Ibid
- ^{xxvii} See Year 1 report. (Alameda Child Development Corps: Year 1 Qualitative Implementation Study February 2002. PACE Web Series 02-W01. http://pace.berkeley.edu/al_cs.pdf)
- ^{xxviii} See http://pace.berkeley.edu/pace_bay_area.html for a description about, and publications on, this evaluation.
- ^{xxix} For comparisons with county workforce demographic data, see Year 1 Progress Report of the evaluation of CRI programs <http://pace.berkeley.edu/Pol.Br.03-2_Press.pdf>.
- ^{xxx} Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding and missing data for some indicators.
- ^{xxxi} Community colleges included in sample are: Ohlone, Chabot, Las Positas, and Merritt
- ^{xxxii} Missing data from Las Positas
- ^{xxxiii} Whitebook, Sakai, Gerber, & Howes (2001). See Note viii.

Policy Analysis for California Education PACE
University of California, Berkeley and Davis
Stanford University
3653 Tolman Hall
Berkeley, CA 94720-1670

Telephone: (510) 642-7223
<http://pace.berkeley.edu>
