

What is the Child Care Outcomes Project?

Between October 1997 and March 1999, Philliber Research Associates (PRA) will be collaborating with the Marin Community Foundation and its child care and child development grantees to develop, implement, and test an assessment instrument for evaluating outcomes in child care and child development programs. The project is organized in three stages:

Stage 1: Preparation for Implementation

During the first few months, PRA will work with the cooperating programs to:

- ◆ Develop logic (or theories of change models);
- ◆ Review previous and existing assessment strategies;
- ◆ Develop common assessment protocols and standards;
- ◆ Design a common data set;
- ◆ Develop recommendations for policies and strategies related to issues of confidentiality, ownership, and cultural appropriateness, and
- ◆ Design a training package and manual

Stage 2: Implementation of Outcome Assessment and Reporting System

During the following twelve months, PRA will cooperate with the programs to:

- ◆ Train staff,
- ◆ Make regular staff visits to provide on-site support and document implementation.

Stage 3: Analyze the Implementation of the Outcome and Reporting System

During the implementation stage, PRA will provide periodic analysis to inform and improve the implementation. This analysis will consist of:

- ◆ Quarterly reports to programs about changes in individuals and families, and
- ◆ Recommended refinements in the assessment instrument, implementation, and utilization.

During the last two months of the project, PRA will prepare a final report consisting of:

- ◆ Analysis of data from the first year;
- ◆ Recommended refinements in the assessment instrument, implementation, and utilization, and
- ◆ Cost analysis of the system.

Who Is Involved in the Project?

The cooperating programs all receive funds from the Marin Community Foundation. The programs include both child care providers and agencies that provide child care subsidies. The participating child care providers are:

- ◆ Canal Community Alliance
- ◆ Fairfax San Anselmo Children's Center
- ◆ North Bay Children's Center
- ◆ Novato Youth Center
- ◆ Papermill Creek Children's Center
- ◆ Community Action Marin (including Head Start, Child Care and Child Development Centers)

The participating agencies that provide child care subsidies are:

- ◆ Marin Education Fund
- ◆ Marin Child Care Council

The evaluation firm selected to operate this project is Philliber Research Associates (PRA). Contacts information for PRA:

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What Does it Mean to Participate?

Data will be collected on all families who receive some type of child care subsidy. There are essentially four forms that will be used across all the programs. Complete instructions on each of the forms follow in sections 2-4. Briefly, the forms are as follow:

- ◆ Family Face Sheet - this form captures demographic information on the parents and children as well as information on how the family qualifies for a child care subsidy. Most of the data collected on this form come from the state form, "Confidential Application for Child Development Services and Certification of Eligibility."
- ◆ Quarterly Service Summary Log - this form is a summary of all the service provided to each family by the child care center for a three month period (a quarter).
- ◆ Quarterly Enrollment Status - this form tracks the enrollment status of each child and documents the date and reason for when the child is no longer enrolled.
- ◆ Semi-annual Family Assessment Form - this form captures family and child functioning in the following areas: parenting skills, social support/network, adult development and child development. This assessment is the core of the outcomes tracking.

Who Completes the Forms?

The decision on who will complete the forms will be made site-by-site. Some forms like the Service Summary Log and the Semi-annual Family Assessment Form may be completed as a team effort to increase the reliability of information reported.

When Do We Begin and What is the Schedule for Completing Forms?

Data collection will begin on March 1, 1998 and will continue for a year under PRA's current contract. The schedule for data collection appears on the following page. The first three months will be considered a pilot test of the forms. Site visits will occur in the third month (May) to solicit feedback on the forms and the process. If necessary, revisions will be made at that time.

In March, to phase in families already being served by the center, the Family Face Sheet and Semi-Annual Assessment Form will be completed on all families who receive a child care subsidy.

Quarterly Forms

What forms are due quarterly?

Two forms, the Quarterly Service Summary Log and the Quarterly Enrollment Status Report, are completed on a quarterly schedule. These forms will be completed on the following schedule:

<u>Quarter</u>	<u>Month Completed</u>	<u>Date Due at PRA</u>
March - May 1998	May 1998	June 5, 1998
June - August 1998	August 1998	September 5, 1998
September - November 1998	November 1998	December 5, 1998
December 1998 - February 1999	February 1999	March 5, 1999

How do I complete the Quarterly Service Summary Log?

At the beginning of the month that the forms should be completed, PRA will send you a set of Quarterly Service Summary Logs with all the families who have been enrolled in your Center during the current quarter.

Using the following scale, summarize the amount of service provided to each family (regardless of the number of children enrolled in the Center). Your rating for each family may be an estimate.

- 0 None
- 1 Approximately 1 time a month (or 3 or less hours this quarter)
- 2 Approximately 2 times a month (or 4 to 6 hours this quarter)
- 3 Approximately 3 times a month (or 7 to 9 hours this quarter)
- 4 Approximately 4 times a month (or 10 to 12 hours this quarter)
- 5 Approximately 5 times a month (or 13 to 15 hours this quarter)
- 6 daily or nearly daily (or over 45 hours this quarter)

Please give a rating for every category of service, even if your Center does not typically provide that service (e.g., male involvement services/activities). If your Center does not provide the service or if the family did not receive any of that service use the code "0" for "none".

The categories of service are as follows:

- ◆ **Child focused enhanced services** - any additional services to the child above and beyond the routine. Example, a special field trip to enrich the children culturally.
- ◆ **Educational support services for parents** - any educational workshop or training (such as ESL classes) that is not focused on parenting education.
- ◆ **Formal parenting education** - a course or formal workshop whether or not a written curriculum is used.
- ◆ **Informal parenting education** - impromptu parenting education (e.g., a group discussion amongst staff and parents) or one-to-one guidance that is provided without a formal curriculum.

- ◆ **Home visits** -- supportive services that are provided by a Center staff member at the family's home.
- ◆ **Formal counseling/mental health services** - counseling or therapy that is provided by a mental health professional (either individual, group or family focused).
- ◆ **Parent support activities** - formal or informal gathering of parents for the purposes of mutual support or supportive counseling or encouragement provided to a parent in a 1-1 setting by any member of the Center staff.
- ◆ **Male involvement services/activities** - supportive services or activities focused primarily on males (e.g., fathers) for the purpose of having them more involved with their children and in Center activities.
- ◆ **Leadership development for parents** - training or leadership development opportunities (e.g., parent representative on Center Board) for developing or strengthening the parents' leadership skills.
- ◆ **Family advocacy or case management** - assistance provide to or on behalf of the family (e.g., a telephone call to the school) to help the family achieve a goal or overcome a barrier.
- ◆ **Information and referral** - verbal or written information given to the family about a resource for which they may be eligible.
- ◆ **Family events** - special family focused events that occur at or are organized by the Center.
- ◆ **Transportation** -transportation of children to and from school or to and from home. This category does not include transportation to special events such as field trips.
- ◆ **Prepared meals** -- meals (such as breakfast or lunch) provided to the children on a routine basis. This category does not include snacks.
- ◆ **Other** - any other service provided to the child or family that is not captured with the above categories.

A sample Quarterly Service Summary Log follows on the next page.

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How do I complete the Quarterly Enrollment Status Report?

At the beginning of the month that the forms should be completed, PRA will send you a set of Enrollment Status Reports with the names of all the children who have been enrolled in your Center during the current quarter and who are part of the evaluation (those receiving subsidies).

1. **Enrollment Status** -- for each child indicate the current enrollment status of the child by either circling "enrolled" or "not enrolled".
2. **Date Enrollment Ended** - for all children who are no longer enrolled, enter the date when enrollment ended. Remember to include month, day and year.
3. Reason why no longer enrolled - for all children who are no longer enrolled, indicate the primary reason for why enrollment ended by writing the corresponding code into the box. These reasons include:
 - 1 moved from community
 - 2 child aged out of available services
 - 3 child reached school age
 - 4 ineligible due to increased income
 - 5 ineligible no longer a protective services case
 - 6 ineligible - caretaker/child no longer incapacitated
 - 7 ineligible no longer working
 - 8 ineligible no longer in school or training
 - 9 ineligible - did not secure employment
 - 10 can no longer afford fees due to lost income
 - 11 dropped for failure to comply with rules
 - 12 no longer needs child care services
 - 13 "bridg6" assistance ended as planned
 - 14 no available openings
 - 15 other (describe in box)
 - 16 no longer on subsidy, but still enrolled

Semi-annual Family Assessment Form

When is it completed?

The Semi-annual Family Assessment Form is completed at three different intervals:

- ◆ At intake - within 30 - 45 days after a family enrolls in the Center;
- ◆ Semi-annually - every six months while the family is enrolled in the Center; and
- ◆ At discharge - at time when enrollment is being ended if
 - ◆ the discharge is expected and you still have contact with the family, and
 - ◆ the last assessment was conducted *more than 2 months* prior to discharge.

In addition, to phase existing families into the evaluation, during the month of March the Semiannual Family Assessment Form should be conducted on all families who receive child care subsidies.

How do I conduct an assessment?

The Semi-annual Assessment Forms is intended to be used to guide *your* assessment of your families' and children's functioning in four domains-

- ◆ Parenting skills;
- ◆ Social support/network;
- ◆ Adult development; and
- ◆ Child development.

The assessment is *your* determination or appraisal of how well your families and children are functioning. To make an accurate assessment it requires that you consider information that is gathered through multiple means:

- ◆ **Observation** - Chances are that you have the opportunity to observe the interaction between the parents and their children on a regular basis. These observations will be especially helpful when assessing in the domains of parenting skills and child development.
- ◆ **Casual conversation** - If you have an opportunity to chat with the parents, for instance when they drop-off or pick-up their children, a lot can be learned about the parents' work situation or social support/network. These informal discussions are most likely seen by the parents as being supportive not intrusive. In addition, you may have casual conversations with the children that give you insight into their home environments.
- ◆ **Structured conference** - Assessment questions can be woven in if you have structured times when you sit down with the parent to discuss their children's development, give positive feedback or address concerns.
- ◆ **Discussions with colleagues** - It strengthens the reliability of the assessment if you are about to discuss your judgements with other staff who work at your Center. It may be that another staff person might have a different assessment based on additional information they may have about the family.

Hints for Making an Accurate Assessment

When making an assessment, it is important that you:

- ◆ Make judgements based on multiple encounters with the parents and children. Don't base an assessment on one encounter, especially if the parent or child were to be having "a bad day."
- ◆ Try to balance the information that you receive from multiple sources. Parents may tell you one thing but you may observe something quite different in their interactions with their children. You should consider all the information you have available. If you are unsure, talk with a colleague about their assessment or spend some additional time talking to the parent.
- ◆ When you ask parents questions be sure that they are "open-ended" and not directive. For instance ask, "How do you discipline your child?" instead of "You don't spank your child do you?"
- ◆ To help parents feel more comfortable disclosing certain behaviors or emotions, rephrase your questions:
 - Ask questions in a way that does not encourage the parents to give you a "socially desirable" answer. In some cases, it's best to presume that a behavior is present. Ask about the frequency, not whether or not it ever happens. Instead of "Do you ever spank your child?" say "How often do you spank your child?"
 - Pose questions so that they aren't viewed as uncommon. Instead of "Do you ever lose your temper with your child?" say "Everybody loses his or her temper with their children now and then. How about you?"
- ◆ Don't expose your parents to the Semi-annual Family Assessment Form or ask them to rate themselves on the indicators. Your assessment of the parents' functioning may be lower than the parents' self-assessment.

How do I make the rating?

Each indicator (e.g., understanding of child development) is rated on a five point scale:

5	Thriving
4	Stable/Sufficient
3	Transitional
2	At risk
1	In-crisis
U	Unknown

To be sure that everyone has the same definition or general understanding of the points on the scale (e.g., "in-crisis") descriptions are given for each of the points for every indicator (see example below).

1. UNDERSTANDING OF CMLD DEVELOPN4F-NT 5Above average understanding of child(ren); well read in most areas

development).

cognitive and social

education; some but

leading to parental

and/or physical abuse or

inappropriate expectations.

understanding of normal child

of abuse or neglect.

(physical, emotional, cogr~tive and social

4 Adequate knowledge of physical, emotional,

development; realistic expectations.

3 Some weaknesses in areas of development; needs

inadequate understanding; some erroneous beliefs

frustration over normal childhood behavior.

2 Limited understanding, high risk for emotional

neglect-, sees problems that are not there; has

I Little or no appropriate knowledge or

development which may have resulted in some type

U Unknown

When using the descriptions, however, be aware that families sometimes will not fit perfectly under any one of the points. If a family is straddling two points, for instance they have some characteristics that are in the description for "2" and some in the description for "3", then think to yourself, "Would I describe this family as "stable" or "at-risk"?" This will usually help you in making a final determination. If you still can not make a family fit into one category or the other, then a .5 may be used (e.g., 2.5). If you can not make a determination at all because you do not have enough contact with the family to make an assessment, then us a U for unknown. It is preferred, however, that you make an assessment for every indicator.

Make your assessment by circling the number that best fits the family for each of the indicators. To clarify your assessment a brief explanation can be written in the blank box under the indicators. If the assessment is scored as a .5 then that score can be written in the blank box under the indicators. A second option to using the full form for scoring is provided. The two page Summary Score Form can be used in lieu of the full Semi-Annual Family Assessment Form.

How do I use the anchor words?

The anchor words can help you make an assessment, especially when you are struggling to decide which rating best fits a family's situation. In general, a family's situation can be defined as such:

Thriving - Family systems are strong and healthy, fully functional; has achieved commonly accepted standards of family well-being.

Stable/sufficient - Family is strong and has made significant progress in improving its circumstances; is generally secure.

Transitional - Family is no longer in danger, is ready and willing to change, and is planning for its future; is working towards improving its circumstances but is still vulnerable.

At-risk - Family situation has stressors which limits the ability to protect and nurture the health, development and safety of family members.

In-crisis - Family can not meet its needs; presently unwilling or unable to work toward positive change.

Which assessment is this?

When submitting a Semi-Annual Family Assessment Form on a family, please check which assessment period is being rated (e.g., intake, 6 months, 12 months or closing). This will help with our data entry as often new intake assessments are being submitted at the same time as follow-up assessments.

Which parent do I rate?

Families differ as to the number of parents living in the home and the amount of contact you have with the parents. It is important that each time you complete this assessment form on a family that you are rating the same parent or parents. Please check the box that best describes who you are rating:

- Primary -- parent who has primary responsibility for the child(ren) such as a single parent or the parent with whom you have the most contact
- Need -- parent with the greatest need
- Blended -- both parents as a blended assessment
- Separate -- rating both parents but each with a separate assessment form

What questions should I use or what should I observe?

This may be the first time you have conducted a formal assessment and you might be worried that you won't ask the right questions or observe the right things. To assist you, we have provided some sample questions and observations points for each of the indicators. You may find these to be helpful at first, although we are confident that you will find your own words and methods for assessing in this area.

Parenting -- as you make these ratings please take into consideration the cultural differences in parenting.

1. UNDERSTANDING OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT	5
in most areas	Above average understanding of cWld(ren); well read
development).	(physical, emotional, cognitive and social
cognitive and social	4 Adequate knowledge of physical, emotional,
education; some but	development; realistic expectations.
leading to parental	3 Some weaknesses in areas of development; needs
and/or physical abuse or	inadequate understanding; some erroneous beliefs
inappropriate expectations.	frustration over normal childhood behavior.
understanding of normal child	2 Limited understanding; high risk for emotional
of abuse or neglect.	neglect; sees problems that are not there; has
	1 Little or no appropriate knowledge or
	development which may have resulted in some type
	I U
	Unknown

Sample Questions:

- ◆ Children go through many changes as they grow and develop. What kinds of things do you expect your child to do or not to do at this age?
- ◆ What challenges you about this current stage?
- ◆ Why do you think your child does things to frustrate you?
- ◆
- ◆
- ◆

Sample Observation Points:

- ◆ Is the child dressed comfortably for play?
- ◆ Is the parent-child interaction appropriate for the child's age?

- ◆ Does the parent have realistic expectations of child's abilities and intentions?
- ◆
- ◆
- ◆