

California Family Resource Center Statewide Survey

Results Brief | November 2019

Prepared by *Harder+Company Community Research*

BACKGROUND

Over the past several decades, California family resource centers (FRCs) have grown and developed tremendously, leading to a widespread interest in the evolving field. *Vehicles for Change, Volumes I and II* (2000 and 2017) were seminal reports¹ that articulated the unique service delivery methods and family strengthening contributions made by California FRCs. Then, a 2018 review of the FRC landscape in California conducted by the Early Learning Lab² identified four key areas of opportunity to strengthen the FRC system: (1) funding and sustainability, (2) advocacy and communication, (3) professional development, and (4) data and evaluation. Now in 2019, with funding from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Harder+Company Community Research conducted a statewide survey of FRCs in California to build the body of knowledge about FRCs and highlight their impact to further support advocacy efforts.

At the national level, large-scale studies of FRCs have been conducted in Alabama, Colorado, Connecticut, New York, and Pennsylvania. Findings from those studies have suggested that FRCs can help improve parenting skills and increase school readiness, while others have found associations between FRCs and lower rates of child abuse and neglect³, as well as with broader social outcomes, including family income, cash savings and debt management; housing status; employment status; and food security; among others⁴. Additionally, in 2014, the Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers determined that, for every \$1 invested in FRC services, there was a \$4.70 return on investment in immediate and long-term financial benefits⁵.

The 2019 California Family Resource Center Statewide Survey offers a deeper understanding of the characteristics, client populations, needs, and evaluation practices of FRCs in California as a whole and of the state's various regions.



Family Resource Centers are unique organizations embedded in a neighborhood, community, or other entities such as schools or hospitals, that provide family-centered and family-strengthening services that are community based, culturally sensitive, and include cross-system collaboration to assist in transforming families and communities through reciprocity and asset development based on impact-driven and evidence-informed approaches with the goal of preventing child abuse and neglect and strengthening children and families.

Methods. Harder+Company Community Research launched an online state-wide survey of California FRC executive directors in June 2019. The survey was distributed via email to over 500 FRCs. The survey received 161 responses, representing 213 FRCs from 48 California counties. The survey captured data on FRC characteristics, client characteristics, services offered by FRCs and pressing needs for FRCs and their clients.

1 <http://strategiesca.org/vehiclesforchange/>

2 The Early Learning Lab. Family Resource Center Landscape Review. June 2018.

3 The Center for State Child Welfare Data. Do Family Support Centers reduce maltreatment investigations? Evidence from Allegheny County. Fred Wulczyn & Bridgette Lery. December 2018.

4 Colorado Family Resource Center Association. Family Pathways & CFSA 2.0 Evaluation Report. August 2017.

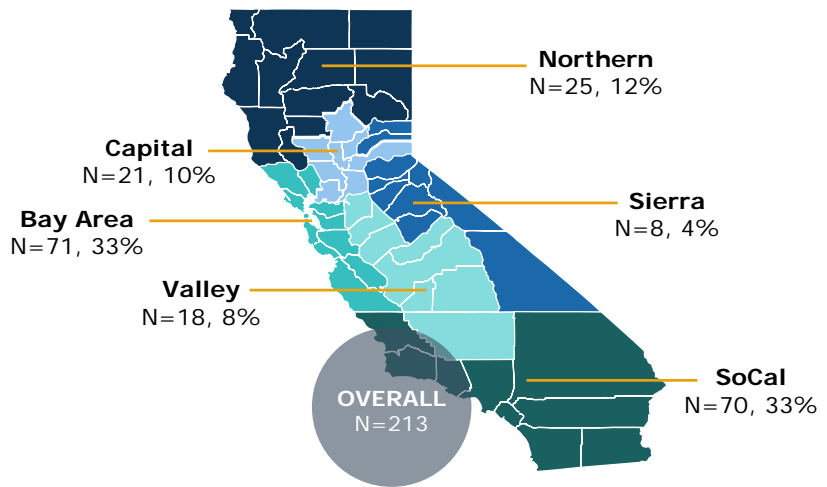
5 Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers. Social return on investment analysis for the year ended June 30, 2014.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Using the Strategies 2.0 Learning Communities regions¹, about one-third of survey responses each came from FRCs in the SoCal and Bay Area regions. The smallest percentage of responses came from the Sierra region (4%).

Over a third (36%) of FRCs operate in multiple locations in their county, most frequently 2 or 3, but ranging as high as 18 sites. Two thirds (67%) have a backbone agency that supports their work, typically an FRC network, nonprofit, or First 5 agency. About 15% of FRCs are "owned" by their county's First 5 agency, while another 57% receive either core operating support or programmatic funding from First 5.



PROFESSIONAL STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

Overall, FRCs had an average of:



37% reported having **more than 20 volunteers** (the largest percentage of FRCs), while **12%** reported having **no volunteers**.

FUNDING SOURCES

FRCs were asked to report their top 3 funding sources. The table below shows the percentage of FRCs who reported each source in their top 3.

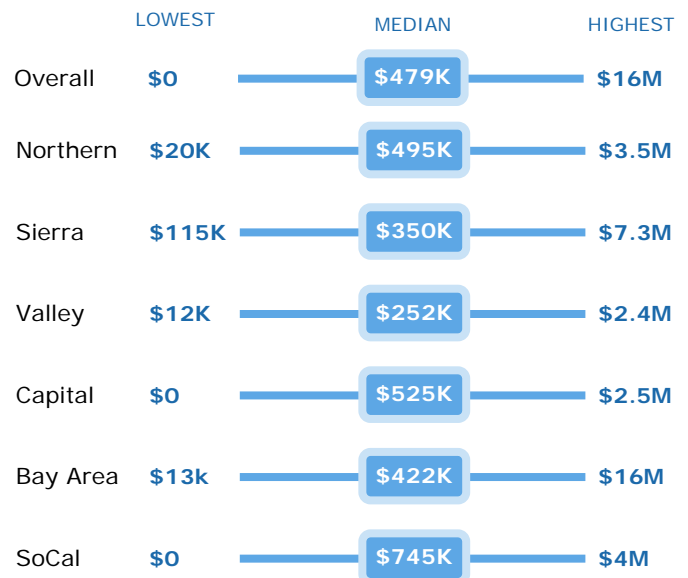
Source	% of FRCs
First 5	60%
County	27%
School District/Charter school	22%
Foundation Grants	13%
City	12%

BUDGET

FRCs' annual budgets vary widely. Across the state, annual budgets range from a low of \$0 to a high of \$16 million, while the median annual budget overall was \$479,000.

SoCal FRCs have substantially higher median annual budgets than all other regions, while Valley FRCs have the lowest median annual budget.

Annual Budget (Overall and By Region)



¹ Strategies 2.0. Learning Communities.
<http://strategiesca.org/services/learning-communities>

CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES SERVED

Annual Number of Clients Served per FRC

2.3K average # of **families** served

2.2K average # of **children** served

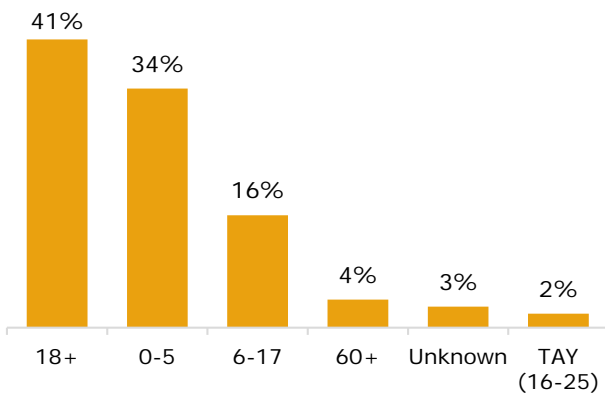
1.2K average # of **children 0-5** served



AGE

The largest group of FRC clients are parents/caregivers (average of 41% of FRC clients statewide) and children under five (34%), while few serve Transition Age Youth (2%) or adults over 60 (4%). Regionally, the Capital and Valley regions serve the highest proportions of children under five (44% and 46%, respectively), while the Bay Area and SoCal regions serve the highest proportions of adults (49% and 46%, respectively).

Average % By Age Group



INCOME LEVEL

FRCs were asked to report the percentage of families served that fell within each income range. The average percentage within each range is given in the table at right.

Yearly Income	Avg %
\$0 - \$14,999	22%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	25%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	20%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	11%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	3%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	2%
\$100,000 - \$149,000	1%
More than \$150,000	0%
Unknown	17%

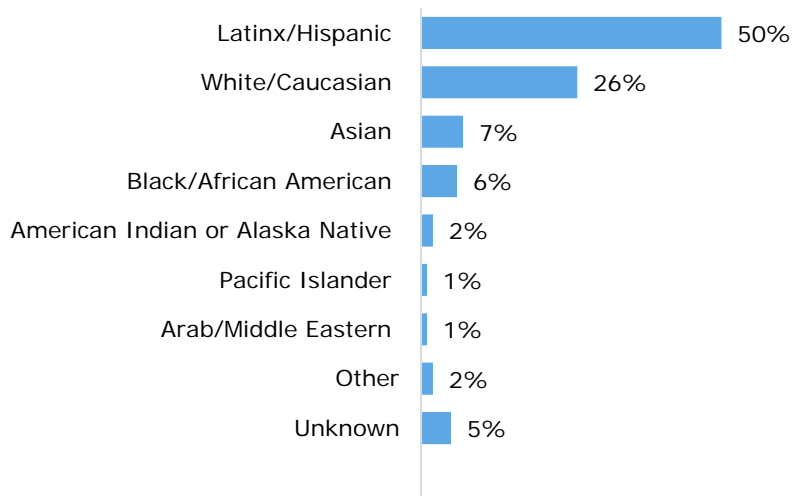
The vast majority of FRC clients (at least 78%) come from families with less than \$50,000 a year in household income.

Regionally, the Northern and Sierra regions served the highest proportion of clients from the lowest income strata (33% and 37% of clients from households earning less than \$15,000/year).

ETHNICITY

FRCs across the state serve a diverse array of clients. However, the demographics of a particular FRC's client base vary widely based on the makeup of the FRC's service area. For example, some FRCs serve one racial/ethnic group almost exclusively, including groups that make up much smaller proportions of the state's overall population, such as: Asian, Black/African-American and Arab/Middle Eastern. Racial and ethnic differences in clientele also vary regionally. For example, Northern and Sierra region FRCs primarily serve White/Caucasian clients, while also serving the highest proportion of American Indian or Alaska Natives of any other region. The SoCal region predominantly serves Latinx/Hispanic clients. By contrast, the Bay Area, Capital and Valley regions serve the most diverse populations, with no single racial/ethnic group comprising a majority of the clients served.

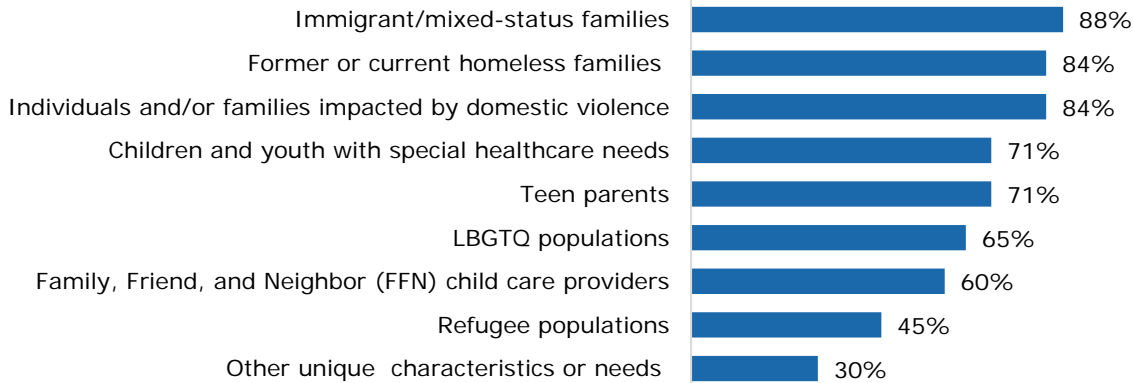
Average % By Ethnic Group



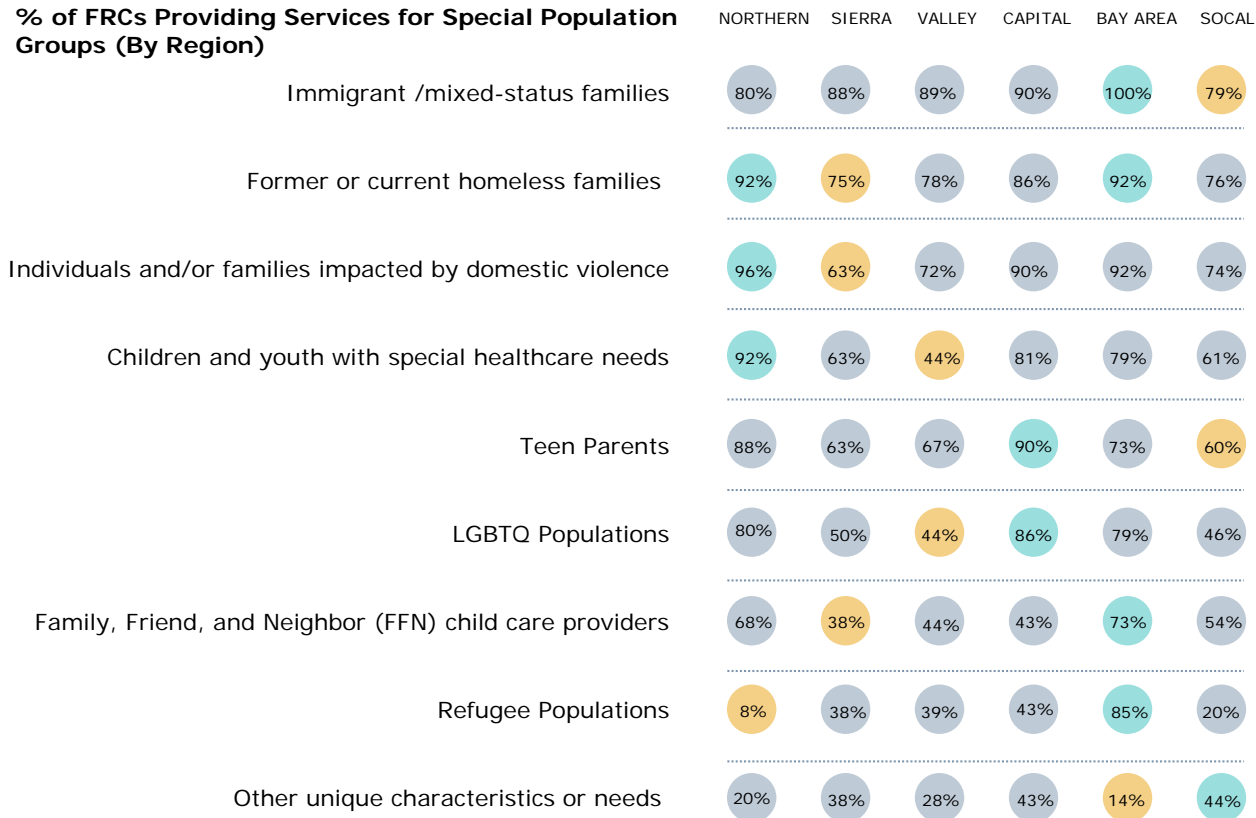
SPECIAL POPULATIONS

California FRCs serve a variety of special populations (see list below). However, the specific balance of services offered for special populations vary substantially by region. For example, all Bay Area FRCs that answered this question reported providing immigration services, and the Bay Area also had a substantially higher proportion of FRCs that offer refugee services (85% compared to the next-highest region, Capital, at 43%, as well as the lowest, Northern, at 8%). Northern region FRCs also rank among the highest in providing services to homeless families, families impacted by domestic violence, clients with special healthcare needs, and teen parents. Meanwhile, Capital region FRCs rank among the highest in providing services to LGBTQ populations (86%), while the SoCal and Valley regions rank among the lowest (46% and 44%, respectively).

% of FRCs Providing Services for Special Population Groups (Overall)



% of FRCs Providing Services for Special Population Groups (By Region)



Highest % per population group Lowest % per population group

FRCs across the state serve high needs families, but there are some regional differences in the specific population groups served. For example, 92% of Northern region FRCs that responded to the statewide survey report serving children and youth with special healthcare needs, while only 44% of Valley region FRCs report the same. Similarly, 85% of Bay Area FRCs report serving refugee families, compared to 8% of FRCs in the Northern region.

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

FRCs were asked to provide their mission statements as part of their survey response. Mission statements were typically brief and spoke generally of the FRC's goals of providing a wide range of services and support to children and their families, and often alluded to the overall goal of strengthening communities. When FRCs' mission statements mentioned specific services, they most often listed general resource navigation, parent education and school readiness.

TOP 3 WELLBEING SERVICES

- 1 Case management and/or Family Navigation
- 2 Access to emergency and daily living resources
- 3 Referrals to healthcare services or public benefits

TOP 3 GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

- 1 Parent education and leadership
- 2 Parent/child interaction groups
- 3 Playgroup programming for children ages 0-5

TOP 3 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SERVICES

- 1 Community resource coordination
- 2 Community celebrations
- 3 Community volunteer opportunities

TOP 3 COMMUNITY BUILDING SERVICES

- 1 Collaboration and partnership facilitation
- 2 Neighborhood and community organizing
- 3 Affordable housing partnership & development

PARTNERSHIPS

FRCs deliver services in partnership with a multitude of other organizations and sectors. Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of FRCs reported working with health & wellness, education and social service organizations, whose services overlap significantly with those that FRCs provide. However, a substantial proportion of FRCs also partner with organizations that provide support in areas such as housing and homelessness, and immigration and legal services.

Percentage of FRCs who partnered with the following types of organizations in the last year:



Public Health
94%



Mental Health
94%



Social & Human Services
94%



Healthcare
93%



Child Care/Preschool
93%



Schools
92%



Housing & Homelessness
85%



Immigrant Support
80%



Dental
79%



Legal Services
73%

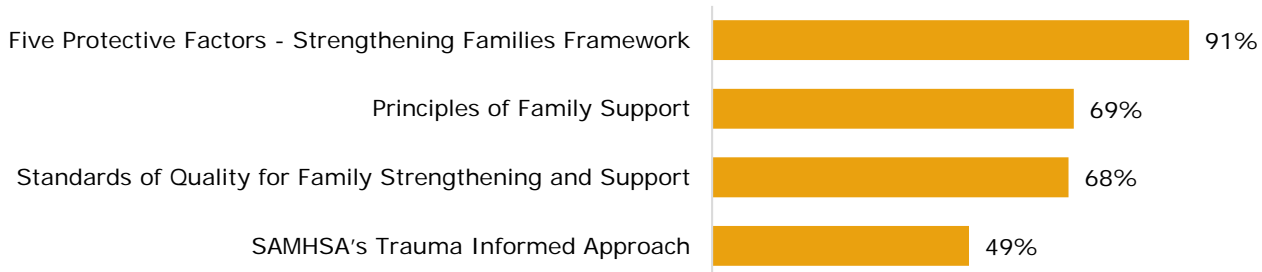
STANDARDS, PRACTICES, & TOOLS

While there is no central governing body or universal practice standards for FRCs in California, the survey asked respondents to note whether their FRCs used certain service-delivery or program design frameworks or evidence-based practices (EBPs) to inform their services. Overall, most FRCs surveyed use multiple well-established frameworks to guide their programming, but vary in the extent to which EBPs informed their services.

STANDARD & FRAMEWORKS

FRCs were asked to identify standards and/or frameworks that they used to guide programming. Five standards and/or frameworks were used by a large proportion of FRCs surveyed.

Standards and/or Frameworks Used by FRCs



EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

82% of FRCs report using at least one evidence-based practice (EBP) to inform their services. Slightly under a third (31%) report using three or more EBPs. The use of EBPs ranges widely by region, with 100% of Sierra FRCs (note: small sample size) reporting use of at least one EBP, while the Valley region reports the lowest use of EBPs (39% did not use any EBPs).

The Bay Area FRCs report the highest proportion of usage of three or more EBPs (60%), compared to the next-highest region (Sierra: 38%) and the lowest region (Capital: 5%).



FRC use of evidence-based practices (Overall)

82% use **at least one** evidence-based practice

59% use **two or more** evidence-based practices

31% use **three or more** evidence-based practices

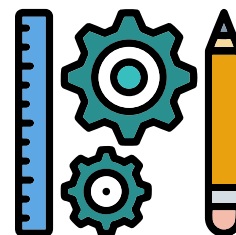
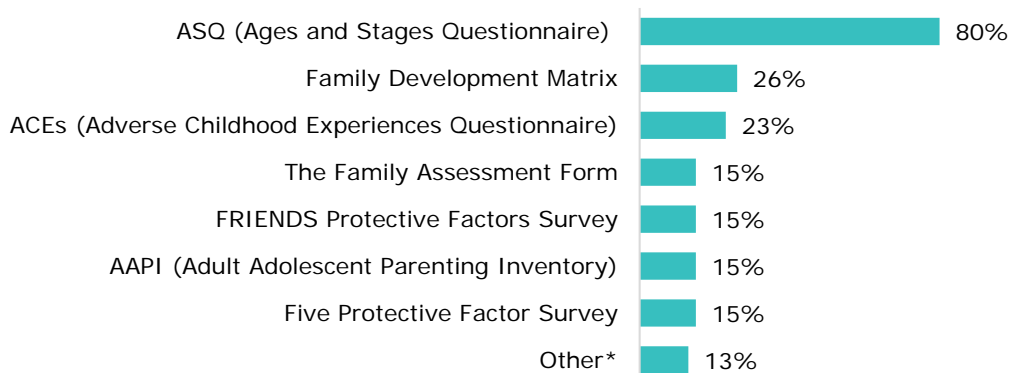
FRC use of evidence-based practices (By Region)

	at least one	two or more	three or more
Northern	92%	32%	8%
Sierra	100%	63%	38%
Valley	61%	27%	11%
Capital	72%	53%	5%
Bay Area	83%	75%	60%
SoCal	69%	59%	23%

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

California FRCs use a variety of assessments in their work with children and families. The most commonly used assessment tool among California FRCs was the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), with 80% of FRCs reporting its use. The Family Development Matrix and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Questionnaire were also used by a substantial proportion of FRCs (26% and 23%, respectively).

Assessment Tools Used by FRCs



OUTCOMES & IMPACT

While FRCs are generally intended to support family functioning and child development, they have the flexibility to tailor their services to the needs of their local population. As a result, FRCs often focus on outcomes that go well beyond the “traditional” FRC role of providing more holistic support for families.

Whether and how these outcomes are measured, however, varies widely from one FRC to the next. When robust evaluation does take place, it is typically through the efforts of *networks* of FRCs or county First 5 agencies, rather than individual FRCs.



FRCs were asked to report the top 3 outcomes or goals their FRC is working towards.



Outcomes related to **parenting** (increased parental knowledge, engagement and skills) were most frequently represented (15% of FRCs) among the top 3 key outcomes.

Other frequently-cited outcomes included those related to:



Health, well-being and child development



Access to resources and referrals



School readiness



Financial stability of parents/caregivers



Abuse and neglect



Mental health

* “Other” responses included 20 other tools, including local and national assessments and surveys.

PAST EVALUATIONS

FRCs who responded to the survey were also invited to submit examples of evaluations of their programs or services from the last 5 years. Harder+Company's analysis of these submissions revealed that positive outcomes tended to fall into the following four categories:

Client satisfaction | Client satisfaction with FRC services was very high among all the documents we reviewed. Satisfaction rates (rating of positive or very positive) for any of the measures included ranged from 79% to 99%.

Parenting skills | Family/parent education is the primary niche of most of the FRCs evaluated. Generally, parenting skills outcomes tended to improve after FRC services, based on parents' self-reported ratings or on self-reported behaviors.

School readiness | School readiness, particularly the achievement of skills relevant to success in kindergarten, is one of the key outcomes that First 5 agencies focus on. Among First 5 agencies that reported data on FRCs or family engagement programs, several reported indirect, but positive, associations between receiving FRC services and improved school readiness, or with behaviors associated with improved school readiness (e.g. likelihood of parents reading to their children).

Child development | The provision of FRC services was also directly or indirectly linked to overall child development by a small number of evaluations. Evaluations found positive improvement in both psycho-social and physical child development.



PRESSING NEEDS

Most pressing needs of respondent's **FRC**...



The majority of FRCs (79%) indicated that **funding** was the most pressing need, particularly a sustainable source of long-term funding.



Additionally, a substantial proportion (28%) indicated that **staffing** was a pressing issue, including the need for additional staff, better recruitment and retention, and more staff development.

The issues of funding and staffing were tightly linked: 69% of the respondents mentioned staffing as a pressing issue also indicated that the staffing difficulties were related to funding.

Most pressing needs of **families** served...



over half (57%) of respondents noted that lack of **affordable housing** was a pressing issue.

Other frequently-cited pressing needs included those related to:



Lack of affordable childcare



Food insecurity



Immigration assistance for parents/caregivers



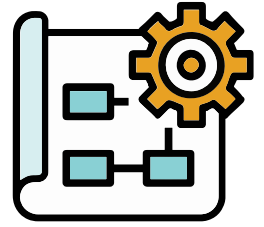
Mental health needs



Need for parenting skills services

SUMMARY

The California Family Resource Center Statewide Survey gathered data on over 200 FRCs in the state. Results show that FRCs provide family-strengthening services to thousands of the state's most vulnerable children and families each year. California FRCs support families experiencing poverty, homelessness, domestic violence, and special health care needs. Case management and family navigation, parent education and leadership, community resource coordination and collaboration, and partnership facilitation are top service categories offered by FRCs. Other key highlights from the statewide survey include:



The structure of California FRCs varies considerably, with a third of FRCs having more than one location and two-thirds operating with the support of a backbone agency. The different structures speak to the flexibility of FRCs to adapt to community needs, and also presents challenges to the field in clearly identifying what *is* and *isn't* an FRC.



The median operating budget of a California FRC is \$470,000 annually. Over half (60%) of FRCs list their county First 5 agency as one of their top 3 funders, which may pose a challenge for sustained funding in coming years, as First 5 revenues continue to decline.



FRCs maintain a lean contingent of paid staff – an average of 11 full-time and 4 part-time staff per FRC. However, they rely heavily on volunteers to supplement their staff, with 37% of FRCs reporting 20 or more volunteers.



Few California FRCs have conducted rigorous evaluations of their services. This presents an opportunity for larger scale evaluations of FRCs in California, such as those that have been done in other states, which could further the field's understanding of the unique impacts of FRCs and support advocacy efforts, particularly around funding which was identified by FRCs as a pressing need.

LEARN MORE

To access the series of products of the 2019 California FRC Statewide Survey, visit: harderco.com/2019-ca-frc-statewide-survey