

# Family Resource Center Statewide Survey: Future Directions

In June 2019, with funding from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Harder+Company Community Research conducted a statewide survey of FRCs in California, building upon previous efforts of organizations like Strategies 2.0, the Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) and the California Family Resource Association (CFRA), to expand the body of knowledge on FRCs and highlight their impact. The survey received 161 responses, representing 213 FRCs from 48 California counties, and captured data on FRC characteristics, client characteristics, and services offered.

While the survey results surface some of the challenges faced by California FRCs such as funding, staffing, and clarity around FRC definition and shared identity, it was not the goal of this particular project to generate solutions to the challenges. Rather, the goal of the survey was to provide data to help align communication to further support advocacy efforts. With that goal in mind, below are some potential next steps to continue to build an understanding of the role FRCs play at both the community and state levels and distill the impacts of their efforts:

- **Repeat the California Statewide FRC Survey.** Consider repeating the statewide survey every 3-5 years to track changes in FRC characteristics across the state. Make refinements and add additional questions as the field evolves.

Future surveys may benefit from exploration of the following topics:

- ***Relationship between FRCs and county First 5 agencies.*** The relationship between FRCs and their parent First 5 agencies is an area that could yield important and timely insights. The FRC survey found that a majority of FRCs depend on funding from First 5's tobacco tax revenues and that many are administered directly by a First 5. However, this source of funding is dwindling year over year. At the same time, many First 5 agencies have begun to shift away from funding direct services and towards a systems focus. Future surveys could explore the makeup of FRCs funding in more detail and suggest opportunities to diversity funding streams, as well as ways that First 5 agencies could support FRCs at the systems level (e.g. through providing technical assistance that would enable FRC networks to draw down state or federal funds, strengthening FRCs' referral networks, fostering collaboration among FRCs in a region, etc.).
- ***More detailed, individual-level breakdown of FRC client demographics and services provided.*** The survey found that FRCs' client demographics (race/ethnicity, income, special statuses) vary widely by region – and even within a given region – and that these demographics drive the types of services FRCs provide in order to meet clients' needs. Future surveys could connect data on client demographics to data on services offered by FRCs in order to identify potential gaps in services, either for existing FRCs, for FRCs in which demographics are shifting, or for

new FRCs. This is a potentially important tool for both diverse regions with rapidly changing demographics, as well as for less-populated rural regions where local demographics vary substantially from the state's overall profile.

In the first iteration of the statewide survey, participation was moderate (we received 161 responses), but participation will likely increase as the survey gains recognition and its purpose is better understood. As FRCs and other stakeholders find ways to use the results in their work, it will be easier to communicate the utility of the survey to potential respondents. Participants of the survey results webinar shared some of the ways in which the survey had been of use to them, or ways in which they could foresee using the survey results. For example, attendees shared that learning about FRCs helped them understand how FRCs across the state vary in their characteristics, and to think about the role FRCs play in the continuum of care.

- **Continue to build the California FRC and Family Support Agency Directory.** Through the course of Harder+Company's efforts to identify FRCs across the state to participate in the statewide survey, we compiled a directory of over 650 Family Resource Centers and other family support agencies across California. This directory is currently held and maintained by CFRA. We recommend continuing to build and update the directory and consider how the directory may be improved over time by adding new fields and/or converting it into a searchable online public database.
- **Build capacity for evaluation.** The results of the California FRC Statewide Survey revealed that some, but not many, FRCs in California are conducting evaluations of their programs and services. In other areas of the country, like Colorado, Pennsylvania and Alabama, there have been countywide and statewide evaluations of FRCs that demonstrate positive outcomes for families served. More evaluations are needed in order to bolster the body of evidence of the impact that California FRCs are having in the communities they serve. The field of FRCs in California should first strengthen its capacity to carry out site- or network-level evaluations, ultimately working its way up to regional or state-level evaluations.
- **Identify strategic & sustainable funding for further field building.** Funders can also play a role in the growth of the FRC field. In addition to funding direct services or operating costs of FRCs, which most FRCs surveyed expressed was needed, funders can consider other opportunities to promote field building, such as:
  - Funding for technical assistance to support FRCs to do evaluation. Few California FRCs have conducted rigorous evaluations of their services. Individual evaluations are a first step towards more systematic evaluations at the county or state levels.
  - Funding for evaluation tool development. Some FRCs do not currently use any standardized assessment or evaluation tools. Funders can provide funding for capacity building on how to use these tools.
  - Funding to build data systems to track process measures, outcomes, client demographics and their special needs.