



CARES Plus Quality Performance Review Summary and Program Highlights



FY 2013–14

CARES Plus County Lead Agencies are required to submit an annual Quality Performance Report (QPR). The purpose of the QPR is to provide First 5 California with program progress and information regarding the implementation of the local Effectiveness and Access Plan, which includes a summary of the following program activities:

- Outreach strategies and activities
- Challenges/barriers to implementation
- Successful completion of program requirements
- Implementation methods, including participant services, training, activities, stipends, and other support services
- Progress made on local performance goals, targets, and outcomes
- Local consortium partners, roles, and contributions
- Local evaluation efforts and findings
- Other pertinent information

The QPR was administered using SurveyMonkey. The QPRs were read by CARES Plus team members who followed up with counties to discuss individual program needs, challenges, and barriers and to offer individualized technical assistance.

The survey results are used to:

- Inform First 5 California staff of local technical assistance needs
- Provide for continuous quality improvement
- Inform and share successful local implementation strategies

Enclosed is a summary of those findings. Congratulations to CARES Plus counties on their continued successful program implementation!

CARES Plus Fiscal Year 2013–14 Quality Performance Report

Summary of Findings

CARES Plus (Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards) is a professional development program targeting early educators working with children ages 0 to 5. To meet the overarching goal of improving child outcomes, the program objectives are to:

- Increase teacher effectiveness by improving the quality of interactions with children
- Help teachers develop professionally through completion of coursework in Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Child Development (CD), and degree or permit attainment
- Retain qualified teachers in the ECE field
- Provide smoking cessation training to inform participants and encourage them to share information and resources with families and staff

With matching funds, First 5 California (F5CA), in partnership with First 5 county commissions, designed a local CARES Plus program focused on providing the research-based professional development opportunities listed below. These offerings are in addition to the CORE requirements (see Attachment A). A County Lead Agency offerings may include one or more of the following professional development components in the local program design:

- Component A: researched-based training
- Component B: higher education courses
- Component C: for participants who will serve as a CARES Plus advisor
- Component D: MyTeachingPartner™(MTP™) one-on-one coaching

A Quality Performance Report (QPR), which consisted of multiple choice and narrative questions, was submitted by 34 CARES Plus Lead Agencies using SurveyMonkey. The information collected is used for program improvement, idea sharing, and lessons learned.

Below is a summary of the QPR findings.

Forming a Local Consortium

Each CARES Plus county Lead Agency is required to create a local consortium to develop and implement its local CARES Plus program. Local consortium partners offer a wide variety of services to ensure cost effectiveness and to avoid duplication of services. The following are the primary services provided by local partners:

- Outreach, recruitment, and communication
- Conduct professional growth advising
- Provide other non-Component A trainings

Collaborative Partners

In addition to the required partners, CARES Plus county Lead Agencies collaborate with other local partners to implement local CARES Plus programs. Below are some examples of this type of collaboration:

- The Colusa County Local Tribal Child Care Center provided funding to increase the number of Component A trainings available to participants.
- The First 5 Tehama County Commission partnered with migrant education-related agencies to increase the participation of bilingual providers.
- As part of the Ventura County CARES Plus Program, local community college staff offered free office space to CARES Plus advisors to conduct advising sessions.
- First 5 Merced County provided California Preschool Instructional Network (CPIN) and Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) funding to train Mariposa County CARES Plus participants. Additionally, the Merced County CPIN lead worked with the Mariposa CARES Plus program staff to help develop new training materials, opportunities, and coaching.

Most county Lead Agencies reported strong and well-coordinated partnerships.

CARES Plus and AB 212 Partnership and Collaboration

The collaboration between CARES Plus and AB 212, a similar professional development program administered by the California Department of Education, has been the cornerstone of the program since 2000. This partnership provides access for more participants and helps prevent duplication of services.

Fifty-four percent of county Lead Agencies reported local AB 212 and CARES Plus programs operated seamlessly in their counties. In the remaining counties, CARES Plus and AB 212 provided joint training, allowing staff to participate in advisory groups and work together to address early care and education challenges and barriers in the county.

Local Goal Setting

County Lead Agencies annually report on local goal setting and successful completion of those goals. Below are examples of successful goal achievement:

- County met its goal of increased teacher effectiveness (74%)
- County met its goal of increased retention in the field (65%)
- County met its goal of increased CARES Plus program completion rates (68%)

Local Effectiveness and Access Plan

County Lead Agencies are required to create a Local Effectiveness and Access Plan and update it annually. The Plan must address four elements:

- Integration of the F5CA Principles on Equity
- Priority Zones
- Support Services
- Articulation and Alignment for Increased Accessibility

Integration of the **F5CA Principles on Equity** in local design is required to ensure an increase in participant diversity. County Lead Agencies conducted recruitment and outreach targeting hard-to-reach populations by partnering with local tribal groups, migrant education, and community-based organizations. They employed bilingual outreach staff and offered a multiple of bilingual services including translation services, tutoring, and book lending libraries.

At the local level, county Lead Agencies provided the following bilingual services:

- Offered outreach and recruitment in Spanish (77%)
- Offered other local trainings or seminars in Spanish (94%)
- Offered several local services in the following languages: Armenian, Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Vietnamese.

F5CA provided online CORE and Component D training in both English and Spanish to support the 40 percent CARES Plus participants who identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino. F5CA written materials related to CARES Plus were available in English and Spanish. Additionally, the cadre of 31 CARES Plus Component D coaches spoke a total of 8 different languages and offered bilingual coaching as needed.

Priority Zones are defined as areas of low supply of child care near low performing schools (bottom five deciles of the California Department of Education's Academic Performance Index or API). Outreach and recruitment strategies are based on local program design and need. The following are examples of targeted outreach and recruitment:

- Outreach and recruitment of family childcare providers (91%)
- Outreach to Head Start/Early Head Start programs (85%)

Support Services are provided to local participants to ensure successful program completion. Below are examples of the type of support services provided and the percent of county Lead Agencies who provided that service:

- Required participants to attend an orientation meeting (100%)
- Provided individual participant application assistance (82%)
- Offered information technology training and support (70%)
- Referred participants to community supports (83%)

The following examples include unique local support services:

- El Dorado County Office of Education sponsored a Chrome Book Lending Library for participants without computer access.
- First 5 Los Angeles County offered Saturday computer clinics as well as ongoing information technology support.
- First 5 Sonoma County offered textbook vouchers and loans to Component B (higher education) participants.

Articulation and Alignment for Increased Accessibility required local programs to partner with institutions of higher education (IHE) to provide a more seamless transition for students transferring from a community college to a four-year institution. Examples of support include:

- Community college professors serving as CARES Plus Advisors and consortium members
- County Lead Agencies offering courses on transferring to IHEs and providing more sessions of high-demand courses
- Targeted support for participants in Component B, (i.e., professional learning communities)

Local Program Design of Professional Development Pathways

The CARES Plus Request for Funding Application (RFA) requires county Lead Agencies to include the CORE requirements for first year participants. In addition to the CORE, local programs must offer at least one of the following four components or professional development pathways. A county may include all four pathways in the local design. Data from the QPRs show, by percentages, the pathways provided collectively in local programs:

- Component A (80%)
- Component B (90%)
- Component C (25%)
- Component D (65%)

Additional Local CORE CARES Plus Requirements

In addition to the RFA requirements, 49 percent of CARES Plus programs included additional local participant requirements, such as:

- Completion of Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS), *Help Me Grow*, and/or Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) training
- Participation in Component B simultaneously with the CORE
- Participation in Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS®) observations
- Participation in Peer Learning Groups

Component D MyTeachingPartner™ (MTP™)

As stated above, 65 percent of county Lead Agencies included MTP in their local program design. Ninety-one percent of those county Lead Agencies stated they would recommend MTP to others, and 86 percent of participants reported a positive MTP experience.

The following are sample testimonials from MTP participants:

- “By participating in MTP, I improved my relationships with the children by increasing social conversations and joining them in activities. I also became aware of the importance of asking open-ended questions.”
- “MTP was one of the most enriching experiences of my professional career.”
- “I learned to take time and focus in the moment and be with children.”
- “Viewing my own videos, although scary at first, gave me an honest assessment of my own skills.”
- “MTP helped me work with children with challenging behaviors.”
- “This was my best teaching year ever.”
- “I am more intentional in how I speak with the children and the activities I plan.”

Additional Local Stipends

County Lead Agencies are required to provide stipends to participants who successfully complete CARES Plus requirements. County Lead Agencies may include additional stipends in their local program design. Seventy-three percent of the county Lead Agencies reported they offered additional stipends to participants who:

- Attained a degree or permit on the Child Development Permit Matrix
- Participated in CARES Plus for more than one year
- Participated in a CLASS[®] Observation

Communicating with Participants

In addition to using e-mail and text messaging, the majority of CARES Plus county Lead Agencies stated their primary form of communications with participants was through social media, including Facebook and Twitter. Social media has become the most commonly used form of communication.

CARES Plus Advising

CARES Plus county Lead Agencies are required to offer professional development advising services at least twice annually to local participants. Sixty-four percent of county Lead Agencies offered the biannual advising session, and 36 percent provided additional advising sessions, such as:

- Quarterly advising (9%)
- Bimonthly, monthly, or weekly advising (7%)

CARES Plus advising sessions were delivered through the following methods:

- Phone (76%)
- Worksite (79%)
- Individual Sessions (90%)
- SKYPE or FaceTime (2%)

Local Participant Barriers to Higher Education

County Lead Agencies identified the following participant barriers to higher education:

- High cost of tuition (79%)
- Cost of books (64%)
- Lack of participant readiness for college-level work (70%)
- Lack of General Education course availability (68%)
- Lack of courses on weekends/evenings (61%)
- Shortage of courses in languages other than English (58%)
- Distance to local college (46%)
- Cost of transportation (36%)

Lack of available child care to attend classes also was identified as a barrier.

Local Institutions of Higher Education Integration Efforts

Data indicates the following measures were taken to address participant barriers and challenges to higher education:

- Nearly 90 percent of county Lead Agencies met with IHEs to discuss issues.
- Over 60 percent of county Lead Agencies collaborated with other local agencies to offer pre-service, in-service, and outreach to support participants.

Other highlights include the following:

- The CARES Plus Coordinators in Inyo, Siskiyou, and Orange counties are active members of their local ECE advisory boards.
- Santa Barbara County coordinated and supported a local California State University Bachelor of Arts cohort.
- Sacramento and Riverside counties funded college-level courses during non-traditional hours/days to improve access.

Local Efforts to Support Degree Attainment

Degree attainment is one of the CARES Plus goals. To support participants in this endeavor, county Lead Agencies provided the following support services:

- Advising services for participants transferring from a 2-year institution to a 4-year IHE (53%)
- Links to financial aid and/or scholarships (50%)
- Cohorts for educational support (33%)
- Translation services for English Language Learners, including classroom translators, and links to English-as-a-Second-Language classes (27%)

Local Program Implementation

County Lead Agencies reported the following local program implementation challenges and lessons learned:

- Identified the need to provide more support services to participants than had originally been planned (80%).
- Identified the need for additional trainings for growth advisors (more training than originally planned) (80%).
- Found the CARES Plus Data System easy to use (85%).

County Lead Agencies reported the following lessons learned regarding local participants:

- Encountered challenges accessing higher education course work (63%).

- Were able to access materials in their home language either through translation of materials or use of a translator (79%). This resulted in higher program completion rates.
- Valued the support services offered at the local level. For example, translation services, professional development advising, and stipends used to help defray the cost of training.

Local Program Successes

County Lead Agencies provided examples of local program successes. Below are some of the reported highlights:

- Collaboration between nearby counties to provide training, advising, and other support services led to greater participation.
- Training and access to computers led to improved program completion rates.
- Group viewing and completion of online requirements allowed greater access and success.
- Offering additional college courses at non-traditional times and locations increased Component B participation.
- There was an increased number of family childcare providers enrolled in higher education due to satisfaction and skills learned in the CORE.
- Collaboration with RTT-ELC and other local initiatives increased participation and program completion.
- Current participants were used to recruit new participants due to strong program satisfaction.
- Higher education leads were recruited to assist participants to register, enroll in appropriate classes, and better understand the transferability rules.
- High participant satisfaction led to strong recruitment and program retention.

Program Participation Barriers

Program barriers were not attributed to program requirements or structure, but rather to individual issues such as:

- Access to training or IHE coursework
- Inability to complete coursework due to personal reasons

- Insufficient number of courses in languages other than English, including IHE courses and Component A trainings

In addition, one county noted the participant salary cap of less than \$60,000 was a barrier for participation.

Local Efforts to Address Challenges and Overcome Barriers

Many of the program implementation challenges faced by county Lead Agencies are common to all local programs, especially those related to participant information technology skills and the number of English language learners to be served. Local efforts to overcome these and other barriers include:

- Hiring of bilingual staff
- Partnering with a nearby county to offer trainings and reduce cost
- Working with local IHEs to provide bilingual course work
- Creating computer labs, lending libraries, and common locations/worksites to assist in the completion of online requirements
- Increasing and/or strengthening advising services to support participants
- Partnering with local agencies to fund additional Component A training opportunities
- Establishing local deadlines for program activities to better monitor and assist participants
- Providing transportation to local training opportunities

Local Lessons Learned

County Lead Agencies were asked to reflect on the year and identify the top lessons learned. Below are a few of the highlights:

- Provide more frequent communication with participants.
- Improve recruitment and outreach.
- Align with local initiatives and activities.
- Offer more participant supports (e.g., help with technology, translation, and tutoring).

- Engage and support family childcare providers on an individual basis.
- Increase the responsiveness and knowledge of CARES Plus program staff to better administer local programs.

Local Evaluation Activities

County Lead Agencies are required to conduct local evaluation activities. The QPR data states:

- Individual participant surveys were used by 70 percent of county Lead Agencies.
- Personal interviews were conducted by 27 percent of county Lead Agencies.
- Information from CLASS® observations were used for local evaluation by 21 percent of county Lead Agencies.

County Lead Agencies were asked to report local evaluation findings. Below is a sample of those findings:

- Participants stated CARES Plus participation has increased their commitment to the field and improved their ability to work with children.
- Coaching helped participants integrate new knowledge into daily practice.
- Participants requested more training on how to work with children with challenging behaviors.
- CLASS® online courses and MTP coaching information was most helpful.
- Efforts to increase communications with participants using social media were helpful.

FY 2015–16 Program Planning and Design Changes

QPR data shows the following changes will be made in the next program year:

- Four county Lead Agencies plan to add Competent D.
- Two county Lead Agencies plan to add Component A.
- One county Lead Agency plans to add Component C.

QPR Lessons Learned

After analyzing the data from the QPR, the following are highlights of lessons learned:

1. Social media is the most effective method of communicating with participants. It is the form of communication most commonly used by participants in their daily lives. F5CA should look for ways to incorporate more social media communications.
2. Ninety-one percent of CARES Plus county Lead Agencies used advising sessions with participants to help them integrate CLASS® knowledge and training into daily practice. Coaching is the most successful method of training.
3. CARES Plus offered bilingual services, training, and recruitment and application materials in Spanish. This led to greater program participation, completion, and satisfaction.
4. The CARES Plus Data System is both a data collection system and program management tool. The data system allows county Lead Agencies, contractors, and F5CA the opportunity to have real time data to actively manage participant progress, employment, educational details, and program deadlines related to ongoing program implementation. The data system features were well received by county Lead Agencies due to the ease of use, and the ability to run real-time reports and closely monitor participant progress.
5. County Lead Agencies with strong collaboration and partnerships were able to serve more participants, reduce duplication of services, and provide more support services.

Conclusion

F5CA reviewed each QPR and responded with written acknowledgment of the individual program successes, and offered technical assistance in an effort to support local county work.

Several counties identified the need for more training for CARES Plus advisors. F5CA staff responded to this finding by developing the following advisor trainings:

- An online *Tool Kit for Advisors*
- A four-hour professional development advising course offered statewide
- A one-hour webinar on *Early Childhood Educator Competencies*
- A one-hour webinar on the *Child Development Permit Matrix*

Additionally, a video is posted on the CDTC CARES Plus participant webpage demonstrating how to use the camera to videotape classroom activities.

The QPRs contain information that was used to help inform the development of First 5 IMPACT (Improve and Maximize Programs so All Children Thrive). The findings and lessons learned will be shared with local programs for program improvement ideas.

Acknowledgments

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Local Lead Agencies

Thank you to the CARES Plus Lead Agencies for submitting timely and informative findings.

