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# **KERN COUNTY NETWORK FOR CHILDREN**

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## **FINAL REPORT OF THE EVALUATION PROJECT**

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### **Acknowledgment**

*The consultants, Gary J. Kinley and Warren B. Riley, wish to thank the staff of the Kern County Network for Children, under the direction of Stephen Sanders, for their assistance throughout the conduct of this important project. Their insights into and understanding of the needs of Kern County's children and families; the various public, private, and nonprofit entities providing services in the area; and the dynamics of the 21 Local Collaboratives in existence to serve families and children and their obvious dedication to improving the quality of life of families and children in need were extraordinary. We appreciate their guidance, counsel, and valuable information. The consultants were aided greatly by the staff work of Cheryl Holsonbake, who gathered important data on the five Local Collaboratives during the early stages of the process. Also, the consultants wish to acknowledge the support of members of the Evaluation Project Task Force whose participation contributed to the strength and significance of the findings and recommendations. A roster of the Task Force is provided in the Appendices.*

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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**Executive Summary**

The Kern County Network for Children ("KCNC" or "the Network") was formed by the Board of Supervisors in 1992 and has, over its relatively short history, served as a change agent for the way Kern County takes care of its children and families. Through the galvanizing and catalytic efforts of the Network and its 21 Local Collaboratives, parents, community leaders, public and private agencies, businesses, schools, and communities are working more effectively together to tackle problems and affect change.

It appears that the KCNC - with its collaborative approaches - has made a difference. Families now are linked to services within their own communities through the 21 Local Collaboratives within Kern County that represent unique partnerships between agencies and the community-at-large. The successes of the Kern County Network for Children have been recognized in the state and nation as models. These successes are especially significant because of the stubborn and persistent economic challenges confronting the area and their effects on tens of thousands of families.

In this context, the Board of Trustees of the Network established a set of priority results on which to focus its resources:

- Kern County's children will be safe.
- Kern County's children will grow in a positive learning environment.

The Network's Board of Trustees and Staff dedicated themselves to achieving results in four areas:

- to reduce the number of child deaths
- to increase the number of students prepared for college
- to reduce student dropout rates
- to improve school attendance

In an attempt to better understand its impact as a change agent for children and families in Kern County, the Network commissioned the management-consulting firm of G. J. Kinley & Associates to assess:

- the benefits realized by families as a result of the coordinated delivery of services resulting from the efforts of Local Collaboratives
- the cost savings realized by the community as a result of the Local Collaboratives
- the extent to which funding from the Network itself impacted the effectiveness of each Collaborative

This Final Report summarizes the results of that assessment, a study that took place

from July to November 2000 and examined the impact of 5 Local Collaboratives on a sample of 50 families. Of greatest interest are its findings and recommendations. They are provided in Sections 2 and 3 and summarized below.

### **Findings:**

#### **1. Families Receiving Services through the Local Collaboratives**

- a. In the minds of adults accessing services, the Family Advocates "are" the Local Collaborative.
- b. In all cases, parents report little or no prior knowledge of the services to which they were ultimately referred. Consequently, families were able to access services more quickly than if left to their own devices.
- c. On average, each family received 5 or more referrals over the course of its involvement with the Local Collaborative.
- d. Approximately two thirds (66%) of children and parents seeking services required assistance with basic needs including food, clothing, shelter and utilities.
- e. As reported by parents themselves, the impact on families included: increased individual self esteem, more education and medical care, better communication skills, and, in general, a better quality of life. In fact, many parents expressed that the Collaborative had helped them to stabilize their family.

#### **2. Partner Agencies of the Local Collaboratives**

- a. Agencies participating in the Collaboratives reported that they were more effective, more efficient, and reached larger numbers of clients.
- b. Agencies were able to access resources (human, financial and in-kind) that were not previously available to them.
- c. Agencies participating in the Collaboratives acknowledged better working relationships among themselves and better results working as a network rather than individually.

#### **3. The Kern County Community**

- a. Collectively, the 5 Local Collaboratives studied by the consultants brought more than \$2,566,097 into Kern County from sources outside of the county during a single year. These dollars may or may not have reached the community otherwise.

- b. The 5 Local Collaboratives studied by the consultants created 69.9 full-time equivalent jobs through the funding, which they brought into the community.
- c. The economic impact on Kern County of funding for the 5 Local Collaboratives studied by the consultants is conservatively estimated at \$4,798,601 for the current year according to data provided by the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the US Department of Commerce.
- d. The cost benefit to the community of the work of the Local Collaboratives is conservatively estimated at \$2,779 per family.

#### **4. Kern County Network for Children**

- a. Local Collaboratives reported that the Kern County Network for Children provided technical assistance that enabled them to operate more efficiently, access a greater array of funds, and, as a result, better serve clients.

#### **Recommendations:**

Based on the findings outlined above, the consultants identified the following recommendations for further consideration.

#### ***Service Delivery***

1. The Network and Local Collaboratives must continue to build strong relationships with organizations and agencies in the community that address basic human needs (i.e., food, clothing, housing, and utilities) of families.
2. The Local Collaboratives should develop a balanced menu of programs and services that addresses both the education and health/well-being needs of families.

#### ***Data Collection***

3. The Network and Local Collaboratives should design and implement a standardized, systematic data collection process with regular reporting dates.
4. The Network and Local Collaboratives should institute periodic follow-up contacts with families to document the status of each case.
5. The Network and Local Collaboratives should implement a long-term, outcomes-based study of families

#### ***Infrastructure Development***

6. The Network should facilitate the sharing among Local Collaboratives of "best practices", especially in the areas of community organizing, client intake, data collection, technology, strategic planning, and fundraising.
7. The Network and Local Collaboratives must strive to incorporate more of the private

sector (i.e., private businesses) in the work of each Local Collaborative.

**Policy-Making and Advocacy**

8. The Network and its Board of Trustees should continue to advocate for a streamlined system of funding sources that enhances the sustainability of the Local Collaboratives.

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## **SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW**

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## ***Section 1: Introduction/Overview***

### **Introduction**

In July 2000, the management-consulting firm of C. J. Kinley & Associates was commissioned to conduct an evaluation of the Kern County Network for Children and its 21 Local Collaboratives. The objectives of the evaluation were to assess:

- the benefits realized by families as a result of the coordinated delivery of services resulting from the efforts of Local Collaboratives
- the cost savings realized by the community as a result of the Local Collaboratives
- the extent to which funding from the Network itself impacted the effectiveness of each Collaborative

During August and September, the consultants implemented an approach to the evaluation project which enabled them to make estimates - both qualitative and quantitative - of the important benefits of the Kern County Network for Children, including the associated 21 Local Collaboratives, to the families, the agencies working with the Local Collaboratives, and the broader community. It was a complex approach, and, due to budget limitations, required the consultants to use sampling techniques and to make simplifying assumptions.

This document is the Final Report of the Evaluation Project. Sections 2 and 3 contain a list of key findings and a set of recommendations for consideration by the Network's leadership team and other stakeholders. Support materials are provided in the Appendices for use in understanding this evaluation project and in advancing the "state of the art" for future assessments.

This Section of the Final Report of the Evaluation Project is devoted to general background information, and includes overview material, which sets the stage for the findings and recommendations. Included are general descriptions of:

- Kern County
- Kern County Network for Children
- Local Collaboratives
- Leadership from the Network

### **Kern County**

Kern County, at the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley, is the third largest county in the State of California, covering approximately 8,200 square miles with a population of approximately 639,800 (January 1988). The boundaries embrace urban centers, suburban cities, and rural and remote communities. According to the California Department of Finance, the projected (January 1998) ethnic breakdown for Kern County

was as follows:

White	57.9%
Latino	32.0%
African-American	5.9%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.2%
Native American	1.1%

The challenges Kern County faces in dealing with its many health and social problems lie in the geographic makeup of the county coupled with the comparably high rates of unemployment (14.2% in January 1999) and poverty (24.3% in January 1999). The large geographic area presents a myriad of difficulties related to transportation, access to medical services, and isolation of families. According to Children Now, six of the ten counties (including Kern County) with the lowest ranking of child well being are located in the Central Valley, and poverty/unemployment are among the root causes.

### **Kern County Network for Children**

Recognizing that collaboration and a strategic, coordinated approach towards innovative community planning is effective in overcoming the barriers to healthy children and families, the Kern County Board of Supervisors established the Kern County Network for Children (KCNC) in 1992. From the outset, the KCNC recognized that Kern County agencies, organizations and communities could not, working in isolation and within narrowly prescribed circumstances, effectively solve problems within their communities or successfully improve family outcomes. Consequently, the Network brought together the County's senior policy and decision makers, as well as representatives from private business and community based organizations, to explore possible changes in existing county policy and to facilitate the development of public/private partnerships needed to support and empower communities. The KCNC's Neighborhood Partnerships were a "call to action" aimed at neighborhood communities - an invitation to formalize collaborative efforts and to take ownership of a local planning and empowerment process. The Neighborhood Partnerships were built upon a commitment by Kern County organizations to provide human and other redirected resources necessary to plan and implement local strategies for building safe, healthy communities. The original four Neighborhood Partnership sites were laboratories for learning to rethink traditional roles and to re-deploy resources of public agencies in ways which were more accessible, useful and effective to target populations.

Since 1992, the Network has developed into Kern County's comprehensive policy and integrated services forum focusing on the condition of children and families. The establishment of 21 Local Collaboratives (which include the four original Neighborhood Partnership sites) has effectively addressed many of the issues of access to services and a lack of integrated, coordinated services. The implementation of these services is unique in each community and is directed by the Collaborative participants to ensure that services are meeting the needs of each community.

### **Local Collaboratives**

Kern County's system of 21 Local Collaboratives is built upon the strengths of each

community, focusing on the assets present in each geographic area to build a comprehensive system of integrated services. Some Local Collaboratives are, or have been, funded through Healthy Start funding while others rely on re-competitive funding sources. A number of Local Collaboratives have Family Resource Centers that serve as "one-stop" centers for services to children and families, greatly increasing access and utilization. All are providing or preparing for community planning and prioritization of community needs, and serving as powerful catalysts for systemic change. All utilize a grassroots approach of addressing local issues by including community members, businesses, schools, agencies, and faith-based organizations in their community planning efforts.

### **Leadership from the Network**

This system of Local Collaboratives is a result of the vision and support of the KCNC's Board of Trustees, a group of 45 policy makers and chief executives. These leaders represent Kern County communities, businesses, schools, social service agencies and key organizations working to improve the conditions of children and families. KCNC staff provide technical assistance, oversight of various grants and other supportive services to the Board of Trustees and Local Collaboratives. By integrating services at the grassroots, local community level with the focus on policy at the Board of Trustees level, the KCNC is successfully bridging the gap between service integration and policy decisions on behalf of Kern County's children.

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## **SECTION 2: FINDINGS**

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## **Section 2: Findings**

During the course of the Evaluation Project, the consultants developed a list of findings, which relate directly to the objectives of the study. On the following pages, those findings are detailed. They are organized around four categories:

1. **Families** Receiving Services through the Local Collaboratives
2. **Partner Agencies** of the Local Collaboratives
3. The **Kern County** Community
4. **Kern County Network for Children**

It is important to keep in mind that the findings are based on a thorough study of a sample of 5 of the 21 Local Collaboratives and 50 of the approximately 2000 families served by the Kern County Network for Children between January 1, 1999 and June 30, 2000. Regarding the partner agencies, we sampled 2 Local Collaboratives using a focus group. We believe the sampling techniques have yielded findings which apply to the entire population of families and agencies and to the Kern County Network for Children. To completely understand the benefits of the KCNC on Kern County as a whole, additional study is necessary to extend and multiply the economic impact estimates provided in this Final Report.

### **1. Families Receiving Services through the Local Collaboratives**

- a. ***In the minds of adults accessing services, the Family Advocates "are" the Local Collaborative.***

Throughout the focus groups<sup>(1)</sup> with parents, participant after participant talked about her/his relationship with the Family Advocate. These relationships were characterized as: trusting; warm and compassionate; effective in instilling hope in the parent; and effective in helping them resolve issues in their own lives. Many parents stated that they had been made to feel that no problem was too small and no reason too insignificant to warrant a contact with the Family Advocate.

On the other hand, few parents actually understood what the Local Collaborative itself was as an organization or even how it worked. Many had never heard the term "Local Collaborative" used in connection with the program or its Family Advocate. Parents simply knew that their Family Advocate was a resource available to them in order to access needed services for their families.

<sup>(1)</sup> *Copies of the proceedings of the Parent Focus Groups are included in the Appendix to this report.*

- b. ***In all cases, parents report little or no prior knowledge of the services to which they were ultimately referred. Consequently, families were able to access services more quickly than if left to their own devices.***

When questioned, every parent participating in a focus group disavowed prior knowledge of the services to which he/she was ultimately referred by their Family Advocate. Some were quite surprised that such services existed and were pleased to have found them. Many parents, particularly those who immigrated to this country, were still negotiating life in a new country with different traditions and services. Regardless of their status in this country, all families benefited from being referred directly to agencies that could provide them needed services.

This factor is critical to determining the impact of the Local Collaboratives, not only on the lives of children and their families, but also on the cost benefit to Kern County. Without the Local Collaboratives and their staff connecting families to needed services, many of these children and their parents would require more costly services intended to remediate problems that had escalated into critical situations.

**c. *On average, each family received 5 or more referrals over the course of its involvement with the local Collaborative.***

Family needs varied widely, as revealed by the study of 50 individual families served by the 5 Local Collaboratives the consultants studied. Many families had urgent and compelling requirements for basic human needs: food, clothing, housing, and utilities. Others had complicated, unusual, and/or challenging needs, which would have taxed even an established and well-resourced family. Regardless, Family Advocates drew upon dozens of community partners to identify and "open doors" to resources to meet family requests and needs. The study revealed that, on average, each family received in excess of 5 referrals over the course of their involvement with the Local Collaborative. (A complete listing of all partners supporting the 5 Local Collaboratives the consultants studied most thoroughly is provided in the Appendix.)

**d. *Approximately two thirds (66%) of children and parents seeking services required assistance with basic needs including food, clothing, shelter and utilities.***

An overwhelming majority of individuals referred to services in the community by the Local Collaboratives were seeking assistance with life's basic human needs: food (45%), clothing (15%), housing and utility assistance (6%). Families continue to require these basic services in order to survive and remain together as a single unit. Until the economy of the county changes, Local Collaboratives should plan to continue connecting families with agencies in the community providing these services.

**e. *As reported by parents themselves, the impact on families included: increased individual self-esteem, more education and medical care, better communication skills, and, in general a better quality of life. In fact, many parents expressed that the Collaborative had helped them to stabilize their family.***

During focus groups, parents expressed a wide range of benefits for their families. These benefits ranged from assistance addressing immediate basic needs to long-term changes that promised to both stabilize the family and propel it toward self-sufficiency. Among the services/skills which focus group participants noted were:

- assistance acquiring a job
- food
- bus vouchers
- increased self-esteem
- emotional assistance
- skills to handle difficult situations
- parenting skills and techniques
- clothing
- improved communication skills
- housing
- ESL classes
- counseling
- higher education level
- a sense of empowerment
- assessing health care services and medication, as well as MediCal

To describe the changes both they and their families have experienced through their connection with the Local Collaborative, parents used phrases/sentences such as:

- "(My) family is better."
- "... positive impact"
- "I have more patience with the children."
- "I am somebody."
- "I am successful."
- "The Family Advocate has given me hope."

So great was the impact on families that some parents had begun to discuss how they intended to change the communities in which they lived.

## **2. Partner Agencies of the Local Collaboratives**

### **a. *Agencies participating in the Collaboratives reported that they were more effective, more efficient, and reached larger numbers of clients.***

Like parents, the agencies participating in the Local Collaboratives reported significant changes in the ways they operated. All stated that they knew families in their communities much better and were able to direct families toward needed services more quickly. In meetings of the Local Collaborative, specific family histories and needs were discussed and participating agencies were able to target services toward that family more effectively. Many felt that this collaboration enhanced each agency's ability to serve a larger population with similar resources, get the job done more easily, and work better with other organizations in the community. Lastly, staff of these agencies indicated that they felt more productive in their work with families and healthier themselves.

Agencies also reflected on the cost savings they achieved through participation in the Local Collaborative. Most agreed they were able to do more for less and that

there was less duplication of efforts. Volunteerism in individual agencies was reported to have increased. Many stated they were able to access numerous resources with a single phone call. Others commented that they were able to share the costs of certain expenses and spread them across several agencies. Through the development of new services - such as a teen court - children were being diverted from involvement in the more costly juvenile justice system. Lastly, a local school district reported a 20% increase in average daily attendance (ADA) that was directly attributed to the efforts of the Local Collaborative to keep children in school. That increase in ADA had direct impact on available funding for the local district to educate children.

**b. *Agencies were able to access resources (human, financial and in-kind) that were not previously available to them.***

Local Collaboratives, directly and indirectly, facilitated the flow of new resources into participating agencies within each community. Many agencies reported that volunteerism had increased as a result of the Local Collaborative. Some stated that office space, supplies for events, and other items had been donated to their organization through the Local Collaborative's efforts or its reputation in the community. Agencies reported they had received new funding for programs or services due to grants that the Local Collaborative had applied for and received. In one case, a community partner helped the Collaborative provide optical services to families by accessing a previously untouched resource: MediCal reimbursements for glasses. An interesting phenomenon noted was that families served by the Local Collaborative and related agencies were coming forward to offer their assistance serving others in need.

**c. *Agencies participating in the Collaboratives acknowledged better working relationships among themselves and better results working as a network rather than individually.***

As was mentioned above, staff from agencies in the Local Collaborative reported that they could more quickly connect families with services in the community. They indicated that there was less duplication of services. Interestingly, many reported that services were more community- rather than agency-driven. Collectively, the same agencies felt more accountability to the community-at-large to provide services.

One downside of these better working relationships was noted by agencies. In a relatively few number of cases, families exhausted the resources available to them in the community much more quickly than in the past. Consequently, these families could only be served by accessing services outside of Kern County.

### **3. The Kern County Community**

**a. *Collectively, the S Local Collaboratives studied by the consultants brought***

***more than \$2,566,097 into Kern County from sources outside of the county during a single year. These dollars may or may not have reached the community otherwise.***

Each of the 5 Local Collaboratives studied by the consultants was successful in applying for and bringing grants and other sources of moneys into their communities. During the current year, that funding reached \$2,566,097. Most of these funds originated from State and Federal government sources. Several of these income streams may not have reached Kern County without the efforts of the 5 Local Collaboratives. These funding streams introduced new projects into communities that created jobs and services for residents.

- b. The 5 Local Collaboratives studied by the consultants created 69.9 full-time equivalent jobs through the funding which they brought into the community.***

The economic boom that other regions of California have experienced during the past eighteen months has not reached Kern County. While other areas of the state report unemployment rates lower than 3%, Kern County's rate continues to hover around 14%. Therefore, the creation of new jobs is very valuable within each community of the County.

The 5 Local Collaboratives studied by the consultants have created 69.9 full-time equivalent jobs within the communities they served during the current year. Those jobs ranged from entry-level positions to ones that require professional preparation at the college level. The positions have offered opportunities for individuals to increase their skills and earning power, while providing needed services to the community

- c. The economic impact on Kern County of funding for the 5 Local Collaboratives studied by the consultants is conservatively estimated at \$4,798,601 for the current year according to data provided by the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the US Department of Commerce.***

The Bureau of Economic Analysis within the US Department of Commerce produces a document that assists individuals/organizations to assess the impact that spending for a specific industry or service has on the greater community. That document, the Regional Input/Output Modeling System (RIMS), contains two measures that are applicable to the current effort.

The first calculation recognizes that the money spent by the Local Collaboratives and their employees not only creates jobs and income directly but those dollars also result in additional indirect expenditures before leaving the state. Relative to the 5 Local Collaboratives studied by the consultants, the economic impact of their funding is \$4,798,601 for the current year.

The second calculation, the employment multiplier, determines the number of jobs

supported by each \$1 million spent. The employment multiplier was provided by the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the US Department of Commerce. It assumes that businesses must hire employees to support the trade created by the 5 Local Collaboratives studied by the consultants. It is estimated that the number of jobs created by the 5 Local Collaboratives studied by the consultants is 110, which include 70 direct and 40 indirect positions of employment.

Both measures demonstrate that the Local Collaboratives have an additional impact on the communities they serve beyond that on families or their agency partners. By infusing moneys and jobs, the Local Collaboratives also directly benefit the greater community of Kern County.

**d. *The cost benefit to the community of the work of the Local Collaboratives is conservatively estimated at \$2,779 per family.***

The Local Collaboratives clearly benefit children and their families, as well as agencies, within Kern County. The Local Collaboratives also produce an economic impact on the county through direct and indirect expenditures and the creation of jobs. Additionally, the Local Collaboratives produce a cost benefit to the community which can be measured in terms of money saved by averting the delivery of more costly services (such as foster care) or increasing dollars earned by assisting families to utilize services that result in additional income to the community (such as attendance at school).

Numerous national and regional studies have documented the cost benefit of providing services to children and families. For example, the Perry Preschool Project demonstrated that, for every \$1.00 spent on quality early childhood education programs, \$7.00 are saved through lower retention in grade, lower assignment to special education classrooms, lower rates of high school dropouts, and increased lifetime earnings. Similar studies have been conducted in numerous other areas.

To obtain a measure of the cost benefits, the evaluators tracked the referrals provided to a random sample of 50 families served by five Local Collaboratives. Those referrals were categorized and tallied according to four areas:

- Basic Needs
- Education
- Family Preservation
- Health/Well-Being

Next, the evaluators selected eight areas of referrals for further examination to determine a proxy of the cost benefit realized per family.

Using cost benefits established by prior research on potential dollars that might be earned through the use of services, the evaluators determined the cost of providing:

- a single unit of service
- services to all families referred

Using a cost benefit multiplier, a projected savings/earnings was established for each family. The cost of providing the referral for the family was determined and subtracted from the savings/earnings figure to determine the overall cost benefit to the community. These figures were then broken down to determine a cost benefit "proxy", or average, for an individual family served by one of the Local Collaboratives studied. The resulting figure was \$2,779.

The actual cost benefit realized by Local Collaboratives will vary from family to family. For example, some of the families studied only used one service offered by the Local Collaborative. Others used services that might result in tens of thousands of dollars of cost benefits, such as increased attendance at school, redirection from foster care, or delivery of a health baby who does not require expensive neo-natal care.

*Note: Studies utilized to determine the cost benefits are listed in the Appendices in the Bibliography.*

## Reasons and Number of Persons Referred to Community Agencies by Local Collaboratives

	<b><u>Local Collaborative</u></b>					<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>		
<b><i>Basic Needs</i></b>							
Food	13	0	119	342	27	501	44.3%
Clothing	21	7	53	77	14	172	15.2%
WIC	0	0	1	0	9	10	0.9%
Transportation	0	1	16	2	0	19	1.7%
Utility Assistance	1	4	2	23	0	30	2.7%
Housing Assistance	6	0	7	16	0	29	2.6%
<b>Total Basic Needs</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>761</b>	
<b><i>Education</i></b>							
Career Counseling	3	0	5	0	11	19	1.7%
Child Care	1	2	0	1	1	5	0.4%
Truancy Prevention	0	3	2	23	0	28	2.5%
Employment Training	3	1	5	4	0	13	1.1%
Tutoring/Mentoring	0	5	0	21	0	26	2.3%
<b>Total Education</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>91</b>	
<b><i>Family Preservation</i></b>							
Parenting	2	6	4	5	6	23	2.0%
Financial Assistance	0	2	0	4	0	6	0.5%
Legal	0	1	0	2	0	3	0.3%
<b>Total Family Preservation</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>32</b>	
<b><i>Health/Well-Being</i></b>							
Counseling	4	4	18	29	2	57	5.0%
Family Planning	0	0	0	0	6	6	0.5%
Dental/Vision	0	4	0	2	1	7	0.6%
MediCal	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.1%
Prenatal/CHDP	1	0	13	0	43	57	5.0%
Immunizations	0	0	2	0	17	19	1.7%
Medical Care	1	0	15	0	1	17	1.5%
CPS	0	6	0	16	0	22	1.9%
Lice	0	9	0	53	0	62	5.5%
<b>Total Health/Well-Being</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>248</b>	
<b>Total Referrals</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>620</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>1132</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Average Referrals/Family</b>							<b>5.27</b>

**4. Kern County Network for Children**

- a. ***Local Collaboratives reported that the Kern County Network for Children provided technical assistance that enabled them to operate more efficiently, access a greater array of funds, and, as a result, better serve clients.***

Just as parents spoke highly about the Family Advocates, so, too, did individual Local Collaborative personnel speak of the Network and its staff, especially the facilitators. Local Collaborative staff saw the facilitators as resources whenever problems were encountered in the implementation of their efforts. A fairly new Local Collaborative said that without the assistance of the facilitators, its launch efforts would have taken longer and entailed more false starts than it did.

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## **SECTION 3: RECOMMENDATIONS**

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### **Section 3: Recommendations**

Findings from the Evaluation Project of the Kern County Network for Children lead logically to several recommendations. Most of them relate to the implementation role of the KCNC, in conjunction with its Local Collaboratives. The final, and over-arching recommendation, relates to the policy-making and advocacy role of the Network's Board of Trustees. It is the power of this dual mission encompassing both short-term and long-term strategies - which is a significant strength of the Kern County Network for Children and which has contributed so greatly to its successes over its first eight years.

The consultants have divided the recommendations into four broad categories:

- Service Delivery
- Data Collection
- Infrastructure Development
- Policy-Making and Advocacy

#### **Service Delivery**

1. The Network and Local Collaboratives must continue to build strong relationships with organizations and agencies in the community that address basic human needs (i.e., food, clothing, housing, and utilities) of families.
2. The Local Collaboratives should develop a balanced menu of programs and services that addresses both the education and health/well-being needs of families.

#### **Data Collection**

3. The Network and Local Collaboratives should design and implement a standardized, systematic data collection process with regular reporting dates.
4. The Network and Local Collaboratives should institute periodic follow-up contacts with families to document the status of each case.
5. The Network and Local Collaboratives should implement a long-term, outcomes-based study of families.

#### **Infrastructure Development**

6. The Network should facilitate the sharing among Local Collaboratives of "best practices", especially in the areas of community organizing, client intake, data collection, technology, strategic planning, and fundraising.
7. The Network and Local Collaboratives must strive to incorporate more of the private sector (i.e., private businesses) in the work of each Local Collaborative.

**Policy-Making and Advocacy**

8. The Network and its Board of Trustees should continue to advocate for a streamlined system of funding sources that enhances the sustainability of the Local Collaboratives.

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# APPENDICES

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**Appendix A: Methodology**

**Appendix B: Forms Used in the Evaluation**

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## **APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY**

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## **Methodology**

In July 2000, the management-consulting firm of G. J. Kinley & Associates was commissioned to conduct an evaluation of the Kern County Network for Children and its 21 Local Collaboratives. The objectives of the evaluation were to assess:

- the benefits realized by families as a result of the coordinated delivery of services resulting from the efforts of Local Collaboratives
- the cost savings realized by the community as a result of the Local Collaboratives
- the extent to which funding from the Network itself impacted the effectiveness of each Collaborative

To serve as an important sounding board throughout the evaluation and to ensure access to important sources of information for the study, the consultants recommended the formation of a Task Force. The recommendation was accepted and, with the assistance of Stephen Sanders, Executive Director of the Kern County Network for Children, a very distinguished group of 15 community leaders was assembled for a series of four meetings, which were scheduled throughout the five-month process. Members of the Task Force were generous in providing the consultants with contacts, ideas, and comments during the meetings, and the consultants are grateful for their many significant contributions.

The consultants undertook a rigorous evaluation process, broken broadly into three phases. They are described on the following pages.

### **Phase One: Background**

The consultants studied the history, structure, and accomplishments of the Kern County Network for Children and the Local Collaboratives. Using existing documents provided by the Network's leadership and selected documents from the field, the consultants established a context for the evaluation. Additionally, the consultants visited three Collaboratives in order to get a more in-depth look at their scope of operations and their range of programs and services. This experience was important in informing the next phase of the evaluation and contributed to an early understanding of the impact of the Local Collaboratives on the communities they serve.

### **Phase Two: Profile of Collaboratives**

The consultants, with the assistance of KCNC staff, developed a profile of each of the Local Collaboratives by examining information in seven categories:

- Basic Background
- Organizational Background
- Description of the Service Area

- Staffing
- Financial Information
- Services
- SWOT Analysis

The completed profiles were discussed at a meeting of the KCNC staff to develop for the consultants a fuller and broader understanding of each organization's situation and circumstances. The profiles were instrumental in assisting the consultants in their identification of Local Collaboratives which would become the focus of the remaining study. Recognizing that it was not possible to assess the impact of each of KCNC's 21 individual Local Collaboratives given the time and resource constraints, the consultants turned their attention to 5 organizations which appeared to best represent the types of organizations which had been created and the variety of communities served. The criteria used by the consultants in identifying the list of 5 Local Collaboratives included:

- Geographic Area Served
- Age of the Organization
- Staff Leadership
- Institutional Leadership
- Constituencies Served
- Budget Size
- Relative Strengths/Weaknesses

Following a review of the 21 Local Collaboratives applying these criteria, the consultants selected the following organizations for the next phase of the evaluation:

Delano Neighborhood Partnership  
Kern River Valley Collaborative  
Lamont/Weedpatch Neighborhood Partnership  
Oildale Community Collaborative  
Southeast Neighborhood Partnership

### **Phase Three: Evaluation**

The most intensive aspect of the evaluation occurred during Phase Three, when the consultants focused their attention on 5 Local Collaboratives as a method to answer the project's important questions. The first activity of Phase Three involved preparing a notebook of information on each of the 5 Local Collaboratives. With assistance from KCNC staff, the consultants assembled information and documents to be used to gain a detailed understanding of each organization's:

- Background and History
- Staff and Institutional Leadership
- Staffing Size and Structure
- Scope of Programs and Services

- Funding

Among the notebook's most important sections was that on Programs and Services, which was organized using the framework established by the Network in its publication, *Report Card on Children*:

- Family Economics
- Education
- Health and Well-Being
- Child and Family Safety
- Other Services

For each of these categories of Programs and Services, information was gathered on:

- Name of Agency Providing Service
- Specific Service provided to the Collaborative Families
- Description of Service
- Contact Person(s)

With this matrix of information established, the consultants scheduled a half-day site visit to each of the 5 Local Collaboratives with the intent to gain additional insights into their operation and scope of programs and services. It also provided the consultants with the opportunity to meet the staff of the 5 Local Collaboratives, with special focus on the Director/Manager and the Family Advocate(s). These site visits were conducted in August and coincided with the next step in Phase Three, which was the identification of ten families in each of the 5 Local Collaboratives for further study.

As a key part of the evaluation, the consultants wanted to track specific client families through the maze of support programs and services available to them. To assist in this step, the consultants asked for a listing (by case number, not family name) of clients who had been served by the 5 Local Collaboratives during the eighteen-month period January 1, 1999 to June 30, 2000. With this list in hand, the consultants used a random selection method to identify 20 who would be discussed more fully with the Family Advocate(s). During the site visits, the consultants reviewed each of the 20 cases with the Family Advocate(s) and reduced the final list to 10. Cases removed from the original list of 20 were determined based on their "fit" as typical families being served and, in some cases, whether the family had stayed in the region.

For each of the 50 families selected (10 families for each of 5 Local Collaboratives), the consultants completed a "Summary of Services Used by Evaluation Families" (A sample of the form is provided in the Appendix.) The form was a key source document for collecting information on exactly which family members had accessed which program(s) and service(s) through the efforts of the Family Advocates. The

consultants were interested in knowing the specifics of the recipient, service used, service provider, cost of service per unit, and units of service used.

Data on the form was transferred to a large spreadsheet, which enabled the consultants to begin their detailed analysis and assessment. The spreadsheet was particularly large and complex, with information reflected for all 50 families for approximately forty types of services (e.g., housing subsidy, adult education, CRDP exams, children's mental health, and truancy reduction). To arrive at more meaningful conclusions, related services were combined and services with a relatively small incidence of need/usage were ignored to develop a matrix, which began to reveal typical usage. The resulting list of Types of Services included:

**- Basic Needs**

- Women, Infants, & Children
- Clothing

**- Education**

- Tutoring/Mentoring
- Truancy Prevention

**- Family Preservation**

- Parenting Classes

**- Health/Well-Being**

- Immunizations
- Pre-Natal Care
- Lice

When combined with typical costs and when modified by the cost savings multiplier, the consultants were able to develop projected savings or earnings for each of the Types of Services. Additional calculations enabled the consultants to develop a Cost Benefit to the Community estimate.

During Phase Three, the consultants also conducted focus groups of two audiences:

- families receiving services from the Local Collaboratives
- representatives of agencies working closely with the Local Collaboratives

The purpose of the focus groups of families was to learn directly from them - in their own words - about their experiences with the Local Collaboratives and the benefits they had derived. To reflect the character of the client population served by one of the Local Collaboratives, the focus group was conducted entirely in Spanish using a facilitator and translator. The two-hour session was wonderfully spirited and the nine families represented were eager - as was true in the other focus group of families - to praise the extraordinary work of the Family Advocates.

The intent of the focus group of agency representatives was to hear them articulate specific advantages of working with the Local Collaboratives.

Both sets of focus groups were enormously useful in getting impressionistic data, and did much to "bring to life" the data, which the rest of the evaluation project was analyzing.

From the qualitative and quantitative data gathered, and within the context of "best practices" known by the consultants, a list of findings were developed around four categories:

- Families Receiving Services through the Local Collaboratives
- Partner Agencies of the Local Collaboratives
- The Kern County Community
- Kern County Network for Children

The findings are provided in Section 2 of this Final Report of the Evaluation Project. The recommendations of the consultants are provided in Section 3.