

CHILDREN'S COUNCIL OF SAN FRANCISCO
San Francisco Child Care Connection (SF3C)

Annual Report
FY 2014-15

Introduction

This past fiscal year has been one of significant change for the SF3C program. While the program continues to serve as a centralized subsidy application portal for families, an enrollment vehicle for subsidized child care providers and administrators, and an important source of information for child care planners and policy analysts, we spent substantial time this year reflecting on and analyzing how it works, improving processes, and identifying additional areas for analysis or improvement. The creation of the Data and Planning Advisory Committee consisting of key funders and stakeholders helped us launch this intensive focus on how the program is working, and identify additional data and analysis needed for operation, policy and planning purposes.

Also from the collaboration came the MPHF-funded contractor focus group, which provided important confirmation from Title 5 providers about the importance of SF3C, and a number of suggestions for improving operations, some of which have already been implemented. We also conducted an intensive one-month process analysis for all pulls in November, which revealed what happens to children who are pulled off of the list and the reasons that families don't complete enrollments and suggested additional areas for investigation and possible change.

The intensive focus on the program and the agenda for change led to a transition in the Manager position, allowing us to evaluate the skills needed to shape and manage the program for the future. We are excited to have Christina (Tina) Warren join us who began her tenure on June 15th and has a background in early education policy and analysis and is completing her Ph.D. at UC Berkeley.

Summary of Progress toward Objectives

- 1. Conduct phone screenings for an average of 300 unduplicated families monthly seeking subsidized child care through SF3C**
The team conducted a total of 4,258 phone call updates that included phone screens of families and complete review and update of the family's profile with a monthly average of 354 updates.
- 2. Conduct phone screenings and submit completed phone screenings forms of eligible and interested families to Title 5 contractors and PFA providers for an average of 150 unduplicated families monthly.**
The team completed 2,116 phone screenings for families whose children had been selected for a slot with a Title 5 or PreschoolPLUS provider with a monthly average of 176 phone screens. The busiest periods were July-August 2014 and May-June 2015 when the average exceeded 260 screens monthly.
- 3. Perform "Enhanced Eligibility Determinations" for an average of 5 families per month per requesting Title 5 contractor and/or PFA provider**
The team conducted a total of 207 eligibility determinations for requesting PFA providers with a monthly average of 17.
- 4. Provide a minimum of eight SF3C trainings made available to staff from participating agencies**
The team conducted a total of 44 SF3C trainings for staff from participating agencies.
- 5. Provide a minimum of 50 combined hours of technical assistance to staff at participating homeless and domestic violence shelters, family resource centers, Title 5 contractors, PFA providers and other CBOs**

There was a total of 78 hours of technical assistance hours provided to contractors using the SF3C database for the selection of children into their programs.

- 6. In a survey of families, to be conducted by the Grantee by March 31st of each FY, a minimum of 70% of the families responding will rate the services of the SF3C Need & Eligibility Specialist as “helpful” in understanding the subsidized child care eligibility list and subsidy options. Respondents will report a minimum of 3 on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being “extremely helpful.”**

While 65% of families indicated that the Children’s Council staff were helpful, quite helpful or extremely helpful in understanding the subsidized child care eligibility list and subsidy options (slightly below our goal of 70%), a review of parent comments indicates that parents’ satisfaction levels were impacted by their inability to obtain child care. For example, several parents noted that they had waited on the list for more than a year without receiving a slot. Other parents asked for greater clarification about the enrollment process and available subsidies as well as increased responsiveness and live contact with SF3C staff.

Over the next year, we will be working to improve customer service and address the issues outlined above. Specifically, we are revising our administrative processes to answer parent calls directly and reduce the number of calls going to voice mail. Additionally, the Parent Services Department Resource & Referral staff has prepared a “Guide to Child Care Subsidized Eligibility” which we are finalizing and will be sharing with staff. We believe this will serve as a strong training tool for all staff. Please see Appendix A for further details on the survey conducted.

- 7. In a survey of SFC3 participating Title 5 Contractor staff, to be conducted by the Grantee by March 31st of each FY, a minimum of 75% of survey responses will indicate that the SF3C Need & Eligibility Specialist was “helpful” in placing children into open child care slots as requested by the Contractor. Respondents will report a minimum of 3 on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being “extremely helpful.”**

Of contractor staff responding to the survey, 91% believed that Children’s Council staff were helpful, quite helpful or extremely helpful in helping them place children in slots (ie. selected 3 thru 5 score on a 5-point scale). Please see Appendix B for further details on the survey conducted.

Key Accomplishments for the Year

- We convened the Data and Planning Advisory Committee to identify areas for improvement in program effectiveness and data reporting, and to share expectation for the program.
- We improved the Monthly Data Report, validating all of the data in it, adding additional demographic information about families waiting for care, trend lines, and information about the SF3C operations, including the monthly pull log. We also expanded distribution of the report to include all Title 5 providers.
- We collaborate with Mimi and Peter Haas Fun on the Mission Analytics contractor focus group and evaluation of their use of SF3C, which suggested a number of improvements desired by contractors.
- We undertook an intensive, one-month process study in November that revealed key insights into the matching and enrollment process. It highlighted significant success for the robo-dialing initiative, with 61% of families responding to that method of contact over others. It also showed areas for improvement, such as a very low ratio of referrals from our program to contractors, compared to the number of names pulled.
- We conducted expanded outreach for PFA.
- We successfully hired a highly qualified new Manager.

- We rolled out text-messaging as a new communication tool on June 10, after many months of planning and testing.
- We made multiple upgrades to the database, many of them in response to suggestions from contractors.

Number of Families Served

To estimate the total number served during FY 14-15, we combined the number of children and families waiting for child care at the end of June 2014 with those entering the eligibility list for the first time during the fiscal year. Specifically, 3,711 children from 3,413 families were on the SF3C list waiting for child care assistance at the end of June 2014. Over the course of FY 14-15, 3,294 new children from 2,882 families were added to the list. By adding these two sets of numbers together, we determined that 6,295 families with 7,005 children were served during the year through SF3C.

The number of children waiting for financial assistance remains relatively constant throughout the year at about 3,500.

Typical demographics of those waiting for financial assistance are:

- Children ages birth to 3;
- Asian and Hispanic/Latino;
- Parents working or actively seeking employment.

Key Challenges

The primary challenges this year have been vacancies in key management positions, confirming enrollment data and the limitations of the program's data infrastructure.

Management Vacancies: While the care we took to find the right candidate for SF3C Manager position was worth the time, the extended vacancy delayed implementation of some projects and priorities. Also, the open position of Director of IT (now filled) impacted Children's Council's IT infrastructure and staff capacity to address the priority upgrades to the SF3C database and the need for more sophisticated data analysis.

Obtaining Enrollment Data: The lack of enrollment information is a major impediment to measuring the efficacy of SF3C and to ensuring that the database is an accurate reflection of the number of families that are waiting for subsidies. In the coming year, we will focus on a number of proactive interventions to obtain enrollment data.

Database Issues: In spite of having two open positions, we were able to make significant improvements to the database, which has increased the efficiency of the program and service to parents and providers (e.g., robo-calling, pull-by-pull monitoring). However, each improvement adds layers of complexity to the database and demands on IT staff time.

The SF3C database is more than 10 years old and will not serve our longer-term need for more sophisticated data collection and analysis or as a user-friendly tool for both families and providers. The database limitations have complicated progress toward what would seem to be simple and logical improvements, such as documenting time waiting for care or confirming enrollments. In making new, complex demands on a data system equipped for the old CEL, we have seen how a small change in functionality can impact other fields, increasing the risk of error. A recent, comprehensive review of Children's Council's IT capacity by the Plakun Group specifically reports that SF3C's technology is "archaic," and recommends a change in software in the not too distant future, in the context of a larger organizational data infrastructure strategy.

Addressing these challenges has been a top priority these past six months. Having a dedicated program manager, as well as our new Director of IT, will enable us to assess the program's support and infrastructure needs and identify resources and efficiencies for improving services and data analysis.

Lessons Learned

- ***The SF Child Care Connection holds great, but not fully developed, potential as a service for families and child care providers.*** The Mission Analytics focus group study highlighted the value that contractors place on SF3C but also identified improvements that could deepen contractor engagement. The November process analysis also suggested areas for improvement addressed in our goals for next year.
- ***Changes at any level of the SF Child Care Connection program require careful thought and realistic time estimates.*** Along with data complexity, the program sits at the nexus of a complex web of relationships, needs, and expectations among child care providers, families, funders, and other stakeholders. Over the past year, we have raised a lot of questions about SF3C operations, and generated a lot of ideas about how it might be improved. With a new Manager on board, we will be able to evaluate these ideas and prioritize improvements to operations and the database that will have the greatest impact in helping us to meet our goals.
- ***The absence of an SF3C Manager provided a unique opportunity to engage staff on accessing the untapped potential of the program.*** Leadership working with the program during the interim period noted areas where program staff could more actively manage the program data and processes, as well as provide more proactive customer service. This helped frame what SF3C needs in a new manager. In addition, creating the position of Program Lead and Data Analyst, filled by Chacy Ou, greatly enhanced our reporting capacity and enabled us to improve monthly reports. Chacy will also be a solid resource for the onboarding of the new manager.

Appendix A

Results from SF3C Parent Survey – June 2015

Overview

The Children’s Council surveyed families who were active members on the SF3C list as of June 2015 to learn more about their experiences and satisfaction with the SF3C database and support staff service. The survey was electronic and translated into English, Spanish and Chinese language. Email invitations were sent to all active members of the SF3C database. Of the 1,599 SF3C participants who were surveyed, 173 completed it - yielding a response rate of 11%. Of these respondents, 57% (99) were in English, 19% (32) were in Spanish, and 24% (42) were in Chinese.

1. How helpful was the staff in explaining possible child care openings/slots and the next steps in the process?

65% of families believed that Children’s Council staff were helpful, quite helpful or extremely helpful (ie. selected 3 thru 5 score on a 5-point scale)

While 65% of families indicated that the Children’s Council staff were helpful, quite helpful or extremely helpful (slightly below our goal of 70%), a review of parent comments indicates that parents’s satisfaction levels were impacted by their inability to obtain a child care slot. For example, several parents noted that they had waited on the list for more than a year without receiving a slot. Other parents asked for greater clarification about the enrollment process and available subsidies as well as increased responsiveness and live contact with SF3C staff.

2. Think about the staff from Children’s Council SF3C that assisted you. Please rate the following statements on how responsive and helpful their service was regarding the following elements:

- a. **Good Listener – 77% of families agreed or strong agreed that SF3C staff were good listeners.**
- b. **Courteous and Professional—77% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that SF3C staff were courteous and professional.**
- c. **Communicated Well – 74% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that SF3C staff communicated well.**
- d. **Understood your needs and concerns – 68% of respondents indicated that SF3C staff understood their needs and concerns.**

The majority of parents responding to the survey indicated that SF3C staff were responsive and helpful although their responses varied across the specific elements. Most families (77%) indicated that SF3C staff were good listeners and courteous and professional in their interactions. Somewhat fewer families responded that SF3C staff communicated well (74%) or understood their needs and concerns (68%). These results are reinforced by written comments received in the survey from families. Several parents expressed their satisfaction and appreciation for SF3C staff services which culminated in enrolling their child in care which they are using and like very much. Several other parents noted, however, that they needed more information and a better understanding of the subsidies for which they might qualify. A few others expressed that the eligibility list process seemed unclear.

Appendix B

Results from SF3C Contractor Survey – June 2015

Overview

The Children’s Council surveyed contractor staff who were active members on the SF3C list as of June 2015 to learn more about their experiences and satisfaction with the SF3C database and support staff service. The survey was electronic, and email invitations were sent to staff from all participating agencies in the SF3C database. Of the 71 SF3C contracting staff who were surveyed, 24 completed it - yielding a response rate of 34%.

1. How helpful were the SF Child Care Connection (SF3C) Specialists in helping you place children into open child care slots?
91% of respondents believed that Children’s Council staff were helpful, quite helpful or extremely helpful in placing children in open child care slots (ie. selected 3 thru 5 score on a 5-point scale)

2. Think about the SF Child Care Connection (SF3C) Specialists that assisted you. Please rate the following statements on how responsive and helpful their service was:
 - a. **Good Listener – 81% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that SF3C staff were good listeners**
 - b. **Courteous and Professional - 86% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that SF3C staff were courteous and professional**
 - c. **Communicated Well - 81% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that SF3C staff communicated well**
 - d. **Understood Your Needs and Concerns - 85% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that SF3C staff communicated well**

Overall, contractors responding to the survey expressed their satisfaction with SF3C staff specialists in placing children into their open child care slots. Almost all (91%) indicated that staff were helpful, quite helpful or extremely helpful in this process. Similarly, over 80% of contractor respondents indicated that SF3C staff were good listeners, courteous and professional, communicated well, and understood their needs and concerns. Written comments from providers expressed appreciation to SF3C staff for their individual support and helpfulness. One contractor noted that the SF3C process has enabled his program to have a more stable enrollment. Two noted that the robo-calls have expedited the phone screening process. A few noted in their written comments, however, that parents sometimes have difficulty getting through to SF3C staff in a timely manner.