

Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP) Year Two Evaluation Report: Brief Executive Summary¹

OVERVIEW

Los Angeles County's Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP) was designed to address the full spectrum of child abuse prevention including primary prevention approaches directed to the whole community as well as secondary and tertiary approaches directed to families already referred to or engaged with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Although PIDP is not the only prevention and early intervention initiative underway in LA, it is particularly significant for three reasons:

1. **Through a request for qualifications (RFQ) process, PIDP was designed to build on existing community capacity developed over the last decade or more.** Related efforts that have enabled capacity building include DCFS-funded Family Support and Family Preservation networks; DCFS contracts for services and funding from Preserving Safe and Stable Families – Child Abuse Prevention Intervention Treatment (PSSF-CAPIT); contract processes run by other County departments; First 5 LA's Partnerships for Families, School Readiness, and other networks; City of LA Family Source Centers, Gang Reduction and Youth Development Zones; and philanthropic investments in related efforts.
2. **PIDP was designed to fill gaps in local family support and service delivery systems** by highlighting social connections and economic opportunities for families, and encouraging partnerships with existing services to increase access to community services and resources.
3. **PIDP was designed to build relationships between leaders of DCFS regional offices and leaders of community-based networks serving families and children** by encouraging joint planning to fill local gaps in services, joint problem-solving, and ongoing communication.

Thus, while PIDP, to date, represents a relatively modest investment of \$10 million over two years, the implications for partnerships with community-based services, efforts to provide different paths for at-risk families when there are not immediate safety concerns about children, and partnerships with other funders who share the goal of preventing child maltreatment go well beyond PIDP alone. Part of the funding (\$3.76 million) was made possible by the Title IV-E Waiver; PIDP was designed as a demonstration project to make strategic use of those funds.

1-Revised: November 17, 2010. Compiled by Jacquelyn McCroskey, Todd Franke, Christina (Tina) A. Christie, Peter J. Pecora, Jaymie Lorthridge, Dreolin Fleischer, and Erica Rosenthal. For more information about this evaluation report, please contact: Dr. Peter J. Pecora (ppecora@casey.org) or Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey (mccroske@usc.edu). For more information about the LA Prevention Initiative and Demonstration Project, please contact Marilynne Garrison (GARRMA@dcsf.lacounty.gov)



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The Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP) is based on the hypothesis that child abuse and neglect can be reduced if:

- a. Families are less isolated and able to access the support they need.
- b. Families are economically stable and can support themselves financially.
- c. Activities and resources are integrated in communities and accessible to families.

In Year Two of the PIDP initiative, the \$5 million investment by DCFS served nearly 18,000 persons through community-based collaborations and agency/family networks. The majority of the contract funds (50%) were to be designated for primary child abuse prevention efforts for families who might not yet be involved in child welfare.

The SPA-based PIDP networks added value to the existing array of services for families and children by leveraging existing resources and by identifying new resources/partners. For example, the Pomona and El Monte PIDP Case Management model was designed to supplement established strategies to address racial disproportionality. It helped to shorten the timeline to permanency: compared with a randomly selected comparison sample, children in the Family Reunification program served by the PIDP network were more likely to leave foster care during the study period and more likely to experience exits to legal permanency (67% vs. 54%). Children in the Family Maintenance program were more likely to have their cases closed than the comparison group (91% vs. 80%).

Many networks helped vulnerable families access job training and job placements. Some SPA networks were key implementers of a county-wide campaign to help families access Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA). This generated nearly \$4.4 million in income tax refunds for low-income parents across the County by the end of April 2009. Other key findings include:

- Data collected from surveys and focus groups in all eight SPAs highlighted the benefits that parents and youth felt they had received from PIDP. Benefits cited by parents included greater involvement in their community, more desire to engage in community activities, and feeling less lonely or isolated. More specifically, there was a significant improvement across three points in time for five risk or protective factors and a “quality of life” item. This pattern of findings is particularly important because such protective factors have been linked to long-term strengthening of families (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2009) and significant reductions in substantiated reports of child maltreatment (Reynolds & Robertson, 2003).
- In addition, families who accessed the PIDP Ask Seek Knock (ASK) family support centers in Compton were about half as likely to be re-referred to DCFS: About 12 percent had re-referrals compared with 23 percent of the randomly selected comparison group.
- Two faith-based family visitation centers in SPA 8 helped children return home more quickly. Seventy-one percent of the PIDP sample left foster care during the study period versus 55 percent of the comparison group, and 69 percent of the PIDP children experienced “permanency exits” compared with 50 percent of the comparison group. This is now part of a County-wide effort with such centers being implemented in all major neighborhood areas.

Thus, promising child maltreatment prevention strategies for future replication across Los Angeles County include:

- Social connections strategies such as neighborhood action councils and family resource centers, such as the ASK Centers.
- Parent economic empowerment strategies such as career counseling, job training, job placement and the EITC and VITA programs. Between 2008-2010, in SPA 6, ASK Centers trained or placed nearly 300 local residents in the workforce and provided pro bono legal services to more than 1,000 residents.
- Faith-based family visitation centers for parents with children in foster care.
- The combination of cultural brokers and parent advocates (strategies that include community residents and parents who have been through the child welfare system) into a case management team approach.

The evaluation was not able to identify differential effectiveness of various PIDP strategies, but the SPA networks did vary in their ability to organize partners and engage DCFS regional offices to deliver the three major strategies. In addition, there were some key lessons learned about what can maximize PIDP network effectiveness. These were:

1. Local partnerships between regional office and PIDP network staff need to be nurtured so they can be refined over time in response to changing conditions.
2. It is especially important to renew partnerships when there are leadership changes.
3. Formal systems for referring DCFS clients should be designed collaboratively by the key players (in some cases this includes multiple DCFS regional offices and multiple key agencies).
4. Attention to referral criteria and tracking processes helps to assure follow-through and establish feedback loops so that children's social workers receive the information they need to do their jobs.
5. Regional offices should establish and maintain regular data collection systems to identify clients who receive PIDP and related contract services in order to make it possible to assess results and improve services over time.

REFERENCES

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