Current PFF Initiative evaluation activities are moving toward the goal of answering overarching evaluation questions identified in the Year 3 Case Study Plan. The Initiative evaluation team is collecting qualitative insight from staff and families involved in the PFF Initiative to enhance knowledge about the processes, perceptions, and impact of services in their nascence. As well, the evaluation team is examining trends in quantitative data to gain a comprehensive understanding of organizational behavior. Given that the evaluation is currently in process, the present report largely reflects ongoing data collection and the ways in which information will be synthesized to examine 1) staff members’ and families’ understanding and perceptions of the PFF Initiative, 2) the characteristics of families who need services and supports, 3) agency and Collaborative context and mechanisms by which to provide services, and 4) service implementation and impact.

Ongoing Data Collection Activities

The evaluation team is building upon its understanding of the PFF Initiative through collection and analysis of quantitative survey responses, qualitative depth interviews, ethnographic observation and document analysis. Fundamentally, we aim to understand the perspectives of stakeholders and develop case studies of PFF implementation in each SPA. These methods build on previous information collected through conversations with key stakeholders, especially caregivers and case managers.

PFF FAMILIES

Family interviews. The evaluation team regards caregiver report as an authentic, direct means to assess PFF services from a client perspective. Interviews of caregivers who hold families’ perspectives and can articulate family members’ experiences within PFF will provide vital information about service implementation, service quality, family and child well being, and child maltreatment reduction. Families act as gauges of PFF Initiative efficiency and development; that is, as the Initiative improves its mechanisms and organization, so might opportunities for families to increase positive parenting practices and functioning.

At present, the evaluation team is interviewing caregivers about their PFF experience. Initial plans for family interviews involved sampling 10 caregivers from each Collaborative (80 families in total) to capture family perspectives within and across Collaboratives. However, the evaluation team reduced the total number of families to qualitatively analyze and understand the perspectives of a smaller number of caregivers in greater depth. Thus, the evaluation team will conduct depth interviews with two families from each Collaborative (a total of 16 families). This will enable us to maximize resources and capture some of the diversity of PFF Initiative families’ experiences across Collaboratives.

On behalf of the evaluation team, case managers and IHOCs have been asked to obtain consent for release of information from all family clients who are interested in discussing their PFF experiences. To this end, case managers and IHOCs provide families with a cover letter that details the purpose of the interviews and a copy of the evaluation team’s informed consent form to review. Further, case managers and IHOCs complete and return to the evaluation team caregiver demographic forms to guide the selection of appropriate families. The evaluation team then purposefully selects families across several variables, including ethnicity, language, family structure (i.e., head(s) of household, number of children in the home), referral source (i.e., DCFS...
or pregnant women mechanism), and willingness to be contacted for follow-up interviews. Without generalizing this information to the Collaborative, the evaluation team will feature family responses as illustrations in Collaborative case studies and will examine families across Collaboratives to guide knowledge about program impact.

Only two evaluation team members will conduct all 16 family interviews to maximize inter-rater reliability. Interviews will be conducted in English or Spanish with the understanding that the languages represented (thus the number of interviewers utilized) might increase as more families are added to the pool of potential respondents over time. Participating families have been secured from three Collaboratives to date: The Help Group (SPA 2), SPIRITT Family Services (SPA 3), and Bienvenidos (SPA 7). Although case managers and IHOCs have secured many families’ consent with some speed, interviews will take place at a much slower rate given the need to identify families with particular demographics and backgrounds. Interviews should conclude by early June.

**Family survey.** To clarify and understand the perspectives and experiences of all families in the PFF Initiative, the evaluation team drafted a cursory survey. The Family Survey will complement our qualitative inquiry and provide a more representative picture of caregiver views of PFF services and family outcomes. The larger sample will enable us to provide cross-Collaborative data on service quality and outcomes from the perspectives of caregivers.

The team envisioned the survey as providing Collaborative and Initiative level information about the following:

1) The characteristics of families involved in the Initiative
2) Caregivers’ experiences with the referral process to and within PFF
3) The extent to which PFF services address the needs that parents/caregivers identify
4) Caregivers’ perceptions of the quality and helpfulness of services provided by case managers and agency staff
5) Caregivers’ satisfaction with PFF services
6) The extent to which parents believe they have gained knowledge and skills or made improvements in addressing or resolving family needs and problems since starting PFF

The family survey was not planned for the current evaluation year. However, at the request of First 5 LA, the evaluation team began to discuss a means of collecting broad-based family data (i.e., in-person, telephone, hand distribution through case managers) prior to the end of the current contract year (June 30, 2007).

Upon presenting the survey draft to the Evaluation Workgroup – the recurrent meeting of evaluation staff from each Collaborative, the First 5 LA PFF Team, and members of the PFF Initiative Evaluation Team – the team rethought the utility of the family survey at this stage. Responses from the workgroup suggested that Collaboratives already used some satisfaction measures that addressed the types of questions asked in the drafted family survey, thus its purpose seemed redundant. Further, suggestions offered by the Workgroup indicated that the information sought using the family survey could be gained through different means,
dramatically shortening the survey and increasing the likelihood of families’ completing the measure. For example, case managers can provide families’ demographic information prior to survey implementation. Workgroup members also offered that some sections of the survey seemed appropriate for cross-sectional examination (i.e., the referral process), while other sections needed longitudinal attention (i.e., service and staff satisfaction).

With this feedback in mind, the evaluation team has revisited the goal of the family survey and its implementation. With approval from First 5 LA to work toward full survey implementation in the next evaluation year, the survey will be developed and piloted during the next quarter for subsequent use with all PFF client families. The team is mindful of the need to avoid overwhelming agency staff though have included them in the development process. Thus, the evaluation team distributed the survey draft to lead agencies and requested their suggested changes. The evaluation team will survey families 30 days after enrollment in PFF services, and again just prior to termination of PFF services. The two surveys will provide valuable Collaborative and Initiative level information about:

1) Caregiver satisfaction with participation in the PFF Initiative
2) Perceptions of case manager and agency staff involvement with families’ services
3) Urgent family needs that impact functioning
4) Extent of caregiver distress

The evaluation team will pilot the survey using two means: hand distribution and phone survey. The survey will either be hand distributed through the agencies, with families returning the survey to the evaluation team via ground mail, or team members will conduct the survey via phone. One of each type of pilot will take place with the assistance of families from two or three agencies. The evaluation team will seek permission to pilot the family survey through an addendum to the family interview IRB application.

PFF-RELATED STAFF
DCFS staff interviews. The evaluation team perceives the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) as the beginning of many families’ experience with the PFF Initiative. DCFS can set the tone of services because its staff members are the first to assess families’ risk levels and to explain how PFF services might help family functioning. The evaluation team is preparing to interview DCFS staff persons to describe ways in which families are referred for PFF services, perceptions of the Initiative, experiences working with each of the PFF Collaboratives, and suggestions for improvement. Responses from DCFS staff members will improve our understanding of service context, including the circumstances under which families were referred to PFF. Of particular interest is the tone that is set by DCFS referral (i.e., how is a family determined eligible for PFF services; or, how might families’ experience at the DCFS level shape subsequent experience with and participation in the PFF Initiative).

The evaluation team developed interview questions based upon a DCFS staff focus group hosted in January 2007 (refer to Quarterly Implementation Case Studies Report #2). Because DCFS staff members have different knowledge and roles, interview templates are specific to the type of staff interviewed (refer to Appendix). Regional Administrators (RAs) and Assistant Regional Administrators (ARAs) plan and oversee operations in each DCFS office. Emergency Response workers (ER CSWs) assess families’ risk levels and immediate needs. Community-Based
Liaisons (CBLs) refer families to agencies as well as work to align DCFS and agency knowledge and activities.

The evaluation team will interview eight representatives each from CBL, ER CSW, and either RA or ARA staffs (24 total staff interviews). Participants will represent each DCFS office affiliated with the eight PFF Collaboratives. One of three evaluation team members will be responsible for interviewing a particular staff group. This is done to maintain inter-rater reliability with a minimal number of interviewers and to maximize understanding of perceptions within one staff group.

Responses from DCFS staff persons will supplement information collected about service implementation and functioning. Further, the evaluation team will use staff responses to develop a web-based survey for the approximately 500 ER CSW staff to clarify how PFF eligible families are identified and to improve knowledge about service implementation in the context of the agency referral process. The Claremont Graduate University (CGU) Institutional Review board has granted permission for the evaluation team to conduct the interviews; permission from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) board is pending. The team anticipates inviting DCFS staff to discuss their perspectives and activities related to the PFF Initiative during May 2007 and completing the interviews within six weeks after initiation.

**Collaborative agency staff interviews.** In addition to understanding the overall impact of the PFF Initiative across the county, the evaluation team is particularly interested in what takes place within each Collaborative. Through interviews with Collaborative agency staff, the evaluation team will explore how and the extent to which each Collaborative’s functioning and activities are unique and tailored to their respective families and communities. The team is especially interested in the distinct, special, and particularly meaningful activities developed to better serve PFF families. This might include inter-organizational communication and cohesion, outreach and service implementation techniques, and/or family-focused events that enhance the utility of PFF in communities. Also of importance is knowing about the challenges and barriers to implementation faced by staff and the strategies they have employed to address such issues.

Collaborative agency staff members have been instrumental in aiding the development of interview templates for upcoming staff interviews. Throughout the month of April, evaluation team members introduced the interviews during each Collaborative meeting and invited suggestions for the types of questions that should be asked. The evaluation team provided a handout with space available for staff to write suggested topics and questions they deemed appropriate for interviews (refer to Appendix). Thus far, suggested questions and topics include the following:

**Workers’ preparedness**
- What are staffs’ comfort levels working with families who are referred to PFF?
- What training and experience do IHOCs bring to PFF service implementation?

**Referral process**
- To what extent are referrals made within a Collaborative considered easy or difficult?
- At what rate are staff able to access needed services for families?
The evaluation team will interview individuals representing a variety of roles and functions within PFF: program managers and administrators who largely direct PFF services within Collaboratives, evaluation staff, and direct service staff such as counselors and group facilitators who assist families throughout the PFF experience. Given that staff members maintain distinct roles, knowledge, and, likely, perceptions in the Collaborative, the evaluation team is particularly interested in speaking with 3-4 diverse staff from each Collaborative (approximately 32 staff) to gain information from a wide variety of backgrounds and perspectives. The method by which the evaluation team will recruit Collaborative staff is pending, however interviews are scheduled to begin in May. The team anticipates that subsequent interviews will take place annually to keep abreast of evolving collaborative staffing, activities, and practices.

EXISTING DATA SOURCES

Organization Collaboration and Culture Surveys. Early results of the Agency Staff Survey and the Collaborative Network Survey were described in the first Quarterly Implementation Case Studies Report. Survey responses, collected from agency staff during the early implementation phase of PFF, provide the evaluation team with baseline information about Collaborative functioning, including partnerships, staff turnover, staff preparedness to work with families, and internal capacity. Twenty-five program managers, representing 22 agencies across seven Collaboratives, completed the Collaborative Network Survey. Seventy staff, representing 32 agencies across all eight Collaboratives, completed the Agency Staff Survey. The evaluation team is presently reviewing staff responses to the web-based survey for initial trends and possible improvements to the measure. The team has received continuing approval from the CGU Institutional Review Board and approval from the UCLA board is pending. A second round of data collection is planned for June 2007.

FAF data extraction and review. The Initiative evaluation team and Collaborative agencies are reviewing the completeness and quality of PFF family assessment data for PFF families. First 5 LA plans to contract for an export function to be built into the Family Assessment Form (FAF) that will enable the exportation of FAF data into the PFF database. Pending accessibility of FAF data through the PFF database, the evaluation team has implemented a temporary (one-time) means of “extracting” the data from each agency’s database, de-identifying the data, and transferring this data into an Excel or SPSS format.

A copy of the FAF database file is used during the extraction, so no operations are performed on the original FAF data. While identifying information is removed, demographic information such as ethnicity, age, and number of children will remain in the extracted files to allow the agencies to assess demographic patterns in the FAF data. The agency-assigned case number will also remain in the file to enable tracking of families across assessment periods.

The first step in the process is extracting the data from the FAF database into a series of unlinked relational tables. The second step is transferring these tables into a format that can be used to

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1 The extraction tool is pre-programmed not to extract fields containing HIPAA-protected identifying information. This includes client names, addresses, phone numbers, children’s names, and any open-response fields in which caseworkers might have entered client names or other personal information. These protected fields are removed from the extracted file during the extraction process.
examine the data. At this point, the first step (extraction) has been completed with six agencies representing five different Collaboratives, and is currently underway at several partner agencies. The second step (transfer of data) is in progress. Once data transfer is complete (early May), SPSS and Excel data files will be returned to their respective agencies, and the Initiative evaluation team will examine the data at the agency level.

The information gathered through this effort is intended for data monitoring purposes. The evaluation team will review FAF data for quality assurance purposes, including the completeness of data and timeliness of completion. Client information related to service quality and outcomes is not under examination at this time. Once the export function is built into the FAF itself, the appropriate approvals are secured, and the PFF database is complete, the Initiative evaluation team will conduct periodic downloads of FAF data for the purpose of official data analyses to be included in evaluation reports.

Preliminary Synthesis of Data

As we move toward the conclusion of a full year of PFF service implementation, the evaluation team continues to amass information from diverse sources. The team is continuously processing and assembling this information to supplement findings from collection of original data (i.e., interviews, focus groups and surveys). The team is working to synthesize, make sense of, and build upon relevant information from ethnographic observation and document review.

ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATION
Throughout the year, evaluation team members have situated themselves at meetings and events to observe and demonstrate our interest in learning about the PFF Collaboratives and their functioning, as well as the greater context in which each operates. In addition to allowing team members into their meetings, most Collaboratives have graciously opened their doors and consistently welcome team members’ presence at their events. This has resulted in robust information about Initiative/Commission and agency level concepts as outlined in the Case Study Plan.

At the Initiative/Commission level, the evaluation team is concerned with what Initiative supports are disseminated through First 5 LA to PFF Collaboratives, and how these inform PFF implementation and services. Relevant events have included FAF training sessions, quarterly Grantee meetings, and trainings such as First 5 LA’s Home Visitation Symposium. In theory, these supports prepare Collaboratives to function efficiently with clear understanding of Initiative goals and mechanisms. First 5 LA also aims to fuel Collaboratives’ ongoing learning and ultimately their quality of performance. Evaluation team members have positioned themselves at Initiative level trainings and workshops to explore and record notes about the utility of uniform training for all Collaboratives.

At the agency level, the focus is on understanding organizational capacity (including inter-organizational collaboration) and service provision, including engagement, quality, accessibility and availability. Evaluation team members are standing attendees at PFF Collaborative meetings. Our involvement helps to build relationships between the evaluation team and the PFF grantees, and gives team members an opportunity to update agencies on the evaluation process. Team
members record notes and impressions of the meeting to improve understanding of Collaborative cohesion, organization, culture, engagement, and planning. These notes are collected in a repository for subsequent document review (see below). Further, evaluation team members are encouraged to describe the activities and culture of Collaborative meetings, specifically the extent to which Collaborative agency staff members are engaged in dialogue and brainstorming (i.e., is the meeting solely structured for updates, or is there opportunity to discuss and troubleshoot). On occasion, trainings are conducted at meetings, allowing evaluation team members to observe the type and quality of information disseminated within Collaboratives. Given that each Collaborative seeks different kinds of training, has staff with distinct education levels, and serves unique communities, consistent attendance at Collaborative meetings gives the evaluation team detailed knowledge of the Collaboratives’ respective functioning and capacity.

With regard to understanding the context in which PFF and its Collaboratives operate, the evaluation team aims to describe the demographic and sociopolitical context of each Collaborative’s community, as well as child maltreatment prevention efforts throughout Los Angeles County. Ethnographic observation continues to take place at relevant meetings, including DCFS Prevention Workgroup meetings, First 5 LA Strategic Planning meetings, and First 5 LA Data Sharing meetings, among others.

**DOCUMENT REVIEW**

The evaluation team is careful to examine documents related to PFF for information that improves understanding of Collaborative context and functioning, staff training, and service provision. To accurately describe the context of services, the evaluation team has conducted literature searches on each SPA. Searches have produced useful geographic and demographic information that refines the picture of the families who live in each grantee’s service area and what resources are currently available to them.

Documents have also been vital in learning about the Collaboratives’ goals and processes. The evaluation team has collected agency mission and vision statements as well as language specific to PFF to examine their alignment. The evaluation team is interested in how closely lead agencies’ missions match that of the PFF Initiative. Of further interest is how agencies served families before and after implementation of the Initiative, and if missions changed to accommodate its intent.

Updates, agendas, and flyers collected at meetings (as well as notes about those meetings) improve the evaluation team’s understanding of how Collaboratives are building supports for PFF families. These documents might feature planned events for families, staff trainings, and discussion topics related to staff and/or service improvement. Collaborative newsletters provide similar information, although not always specific to PFF families. The existence of such materials, however, speaks to Collaboratives’ capacity to maintain communication across agencies.

**Evaluation Plan Revisions**

The evaluation team is presently developing a new PFF Initiative Evaluation Plan to describe and explain the evaluation logic model and planned data collection activities. The evaluation plan,
revised to reflect evolving conceptualization of PFF and its evaluation needs, is developed from conversations with First 5 LA staff and Commissioners, grantee representatives from the PFF Evaluation Workgroup, the Year 3 Case Study Plan, the PFF theory of change, grantee performance measures and Scopes of Work, and related documents that have emerged from discussions clarifying how best to capture Initiative impact. The evaluation plan includes a guiding logic model that illustrates literature- and evidence-based relationships between Institution/Commission, Agency, Family, and Community levels. The plan will conceptually guide the way in which data is collected and synthesized to answer the overarching evaluation questions.