

California WIC Program
Family-Centered Education (FCE)
Phase 2
Community Collaboration

Final Report
Executive Summary



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December 2003

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Executive Summary

BACKGROUND OF FCE IN WIC

The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Supplemental Nutrition Program is a federally funded program which provides nutrition education, breastfeeding support, referral services to medical and social service agencies, and checks for supplemental nutritious foods to qualifying mothers and children up to the ages of five who are at nutritional risk. At present, the California WIC Program serves approximately 1.3 million WIC participants each month. Local WIC agencies operate in every county in the state, providing WIC services in over 600 clinics.

Need for School Readiness

In 2000, California WIC began an initiative called "Family-Centered Education" (FCE), in response to a USDA report, "Profile of WIC Children" which described a critical need among WIC children for improved school readiness skills. It was learned that low-income children enter public schools with below average early literacy skills, including naming colors, number recognition, and the ability to write their own names. In comparison with middle class children who enter first grade having experienced at least 1000-1700 hours of one-to-one picture book reading, low-income children entered public schools with an average of only 25 hours.

Family-Centered Education Responds to Needs

FCE was designed in response to the critical need for improved school readiness skills within the context of providing quality nutrition education. FCE uses a learner-centered education approach to involve the parents and children in learning together. The parents gain support and skills in their role as the child's first teacher while parents and children gain knowledge of positive nutrition and health practices. Children and parents participate in interactive nutrition education sessions in which children can build numeracy, literacy, and social skills, while learning about desirable nutrition practices.

By engaging parents and children together in a positive educational environment, a group education session becomes more fun. Parents can exchange ideas about food and parenting practices. Activities allow for interactive learning, a learning process that has been shown to increase retention and improve transfer of learning at home, and parental interest increases when their children are involved in the lesson too. In addition, parents see the WIC educator role modeling positive methods for engaging children in learning. The WIC FCE approach supports parents as the child's first teacher in preparing their children for kindergarten, as well as offering nutritional education in a welcoming learning environment.

FCE IMPLEMENTATION

The California WIC Program is in its fourth year of implementing Family-Centered Education (FCE). Implementation has taken place thus far in two phases: Phase 1, Pilot Test and Phase 2, Community Collaboration.

Phase 1, Pilot Test (2000-2002)

California WIC focused on laying the groundwork for FCE through field testing and piloting FCE in a total of 20 local WIC agencies. In 2000, the California WIC Program was awarded a small U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) operational adjustment grant to develop group education curriculum for WIC children. During 2001, the California WIC Program convened an ad hoc FCE advisory committee comprised of local agency leaders in child-centered education. The committee decided to place an emphasis on family-centered education instead of child-centered because of the overwhelming evidence that learning takes place in the context of the family, particularly with younger children. In partnership with State staff, the committee developed initial criteria for FCE lesson plans, and participated in a field test of three FCE lesson plans conducted at five of their local agency sites.

The three lesson plan topics that were field tested were “Gardening”, “Five a Day,” and “Grocery Shopping with Families”. These lesson plans incorporated rich language experiences along with a read-aloud book, music, games, and activities focused on a positive nutrition message while building thinking, math, and social skills. Evaluations found FCE to be an effective way to educate families.

In 2002, the California WIC Program implemented a pilot of these three lesson plans at eighteen local WIC agencies. The pilot agencies participated in a two-day FCE skill building retreat/conference that was provided for fifty educators. At the conference, these educators received educational resource kits consisting of books, music, and display materials to take back to their local agencies. Approximately 1500 WIC families participated in 200 FCE classes during a three-month pilot test. Through incorporating the FCE lessons into their WIC educational curriculum, the pilot agencies also achieved positive feedback from both WIC staff and families.

The first phase of FCE demonstrated that FCE:

- Built support for parents as their child’s first teacher.
- Supported the development of school readiness skills while maintaining focus on nutrition and health education.
- Engaged both parents and children together in an educational setting.
- Provided a positive, learner-centered environment.

Rather than detracting from the WIC program’s emphasis on nutrition education, WIC found that FCE contributed to increased interest in health nutritional practices while, at the same time, improved parents’ understanding of their important role in preparing their children for kindergarten.

Phase 1 of FCE, although successful, had raised questions and concerns:

- **First**, one concern that emerged following the 2002 pilot implementation was sustainability. How would agencies sustain their Family-Centered Education programs after the pilot test concluded?
- **Second**, the FCE experience showed that while WIC had a valuable contribution to make in the area of school readiness, FCE would be most successful if WIC did not work alone. Thus, recommendations were made that WIC agencies seek out partnerships that would maximize their capability to reach the long-term goals of FCE.
- **Third**, WIC needed to know more about the expectations and needs of parents from WIC regarding school readiness activities.

Phase 2, Community Collaboration (2003)

Phase 2 focused on building the depth and breadth of FCE in six agencies with FCE experience. The California WIC Program wanted to help these experienced FCE agencies build depth by offering them opportunities to expand FCE within their agency and to help build breadth by collaborating with other community based agencies.

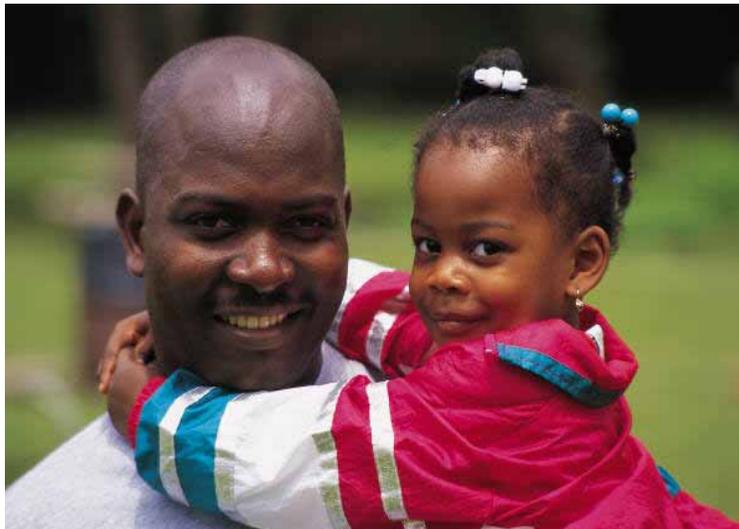
In 2003, California WIC was awarded another operational adjustment grant from USDA to build on successes in FCE and to address the concerns from Phase 1. Specifically, WIC wanted to develop models of FCE collaboration, field test a new FCE lesson plan, and gather more information on the needs of WIC families for FCE. The balance of this report focuses on the second phase of the FCE experience in California WIC.



FCE PHASE 2, COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

This section of the executive summary is organized as follows:

- **FCE Phase 2, Community Collaboration--Project Overview:** Objectives, Process, and Outcomes.
- **Recommendations for Continued FCE Program Success:** FCE Program, Agencies “New” to FCE, and Agencies with FCE experience.



FCE PHASE 2, COMMUNITY COLLABORATION—PROJECT OVERVIEW

Phase 2, of the Community Collaboration, included the following objectives:

FCE Staff Training for Local Agency Nutrition Educators will:

- Enhance practical skills for providing FCE to WIC families.
- Develop skills in responding to FCE challenges.
- Build confidence in their FCE teaching skills.

FCE Collaboration will:

- Provide California WIC with knowledge for improving FCE collaborations and/or FCE programs through discussion and shared experiences with other FCE leaders.
- Help to design and establish FCE collaboration models.

Field Testing of a new FCE lesson plan will:

- Provide feedback from field test results on "Eating the Rainbow at the Farmers' Market" FCE lesson plan.
- Recommend changes to the lesson plan and provide overall guidance to the California WIC Program about formatting of FCE education materials.

Assessment of WIC Family Needs for FCE will:

- Provide information about WIC families' needs for FCE-related services.
- Assess parent interest in FCE-related support from WIC.

Resource Development for Implementing FCE will:

- Offer WIC local agencies FCE lesson plans and resources.
- Provide guidelines and procedures for FCE implementation and for community-based collaboration that can be duplicated in other agencies.
- Provide recommendations for ongoing FCE program development based on evaluation reports and feedback on FCE program success.

Process

California WIC was funded through USDA to explore the efficacy of FCE collaboration. Resources were used to fund local WIC agencies and to contract with a training consultant.

Local WIC Agency Funding

Through a competitive process, six local WIC agencies received small grants to enhance FCE within their agencies and to develop partnerships with community agencies. These six local WIC agencies were:

- Monterey County
- Northeast Valley Health Corporation
- Public Health Foundation Enterprises
- Riverside County Health Services Agency
- San Mateo County
- Sonoma County

Training Consultant

The WIC Branch also awarded a contract, through a competitive bid process, to LeadAmerica, Inc. to provide training to the six WIC agencies and to evaluate the success of the FCE project.

LeadAmerica implemented the following steps to reach project objectives:

- Assessed the training needs of six local WIC agencies and staff.
- Designed, developed, and conducted customized FCE staff trainings at each of the six local WIC agency sites.
- Designed, developed, and conducted three Project Collaboration Meetings for FCE Local WIC Agency Project Leaders.
- Coordinated a field test of “Eating the Rainbow at the Farmers’ Market” (FCE lesson plan) and made recommendations.
- Assessed the needs of WIC families for school readiness support from WIC.
- Conducted FCE project evaluation and recommended next steps for FCE program successes.

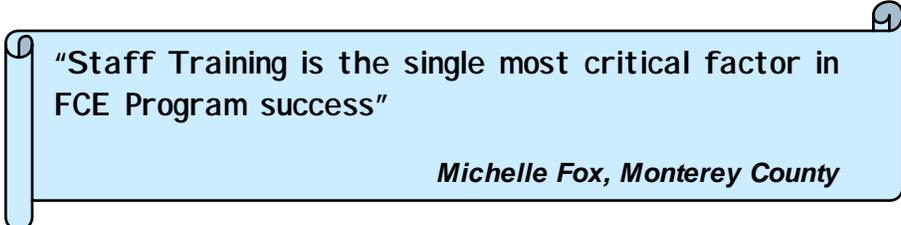
Outcomes

FCE Staff Trainings for Local WIC Agency Nutrition Educators:

- **Needs Assessment:** LeadAmerica conducted telephone surveys and in-person interviews of nutrition educators. LeadAmerica then established the training priorities in coordination with the FCE Local Agency Project Leaders.

In all, LeadAmerica conducted 11 FCE staff trainings on-site for the six participating local WIC agencies. Five of the agencies received two separate training workshops; one received a longer one-day workshop.

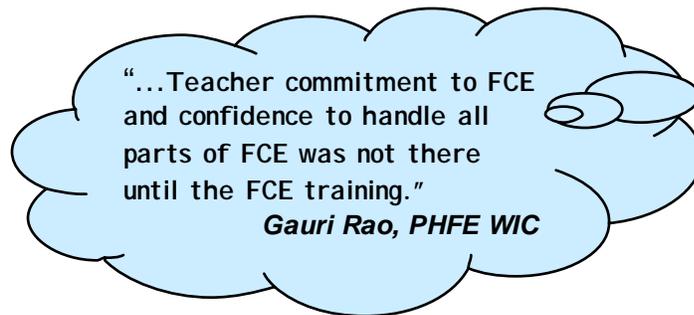
- **Training Topics:** Content of the training included general information about school readiness, facilitating family groups, reading to children, and practice in teaching FCE group sessions.
- **Evaluation:** Evaluations were conducted after each training workshop. FCE Local WIC Agency Project Leaders and the nutrition educators rated the customized staff trainings as excellent.
- **Recommendations:** Agencies already experienced in FCE can benefit from additional training. Recommendations for additional training might include child development, practice-handling FCE challenges, reinforcement of FCE at monthly staff meetings, and reviewing FCE class designs carefully to see that they meet FCE guidelines.



“Staff Training is the single most critical factor in FCE Program success”

Michelle Fox, Monterey County

FCE Local WIC Agency Project Leaders consistently expressed the importance of providing staff training as a vital component of program success.



FCE Collaboration:

- **FCE Collaboration Meetings:** The California WIC Program and LeadAmerica conducted three one-day FCE Collaboration meetings for the Local WIC Agency FCE Project Leaders. The purpose of these meetings was to provide orientation to the project, offer training and support to project leaders, and offer opportunities for agencies to share ideas, and network with one another.
- **FCE Collaboration Models:** The six agencies that participated in this project selected community-based partners to participate in FCE collaborations with WIC. The types of collaborations and their specific objectives varied greatly. (See the next page for a table summarizing each local agency’s collaboration projects.)



Findings and Results of the FCE Collaboration Component included:

- Agencies appreciated networking opportunities and time to share resources and ideas.
- Three models emerged from the six collaborations. These models are available for replication in other agencies -- two models for library coordination and one for child-care program coordination.
- Needs of FCE “experienced” local WIC agencies that were identified as distinct from the needs of agencies “new” to FCE.

Local WIC Agency	Collaboration Project
<p>Monterey County Michelle Fox (831) 757-0739 Foxm@co.monterey.ca.us</p>	<p>Planting the Seeds of Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer Reading Program in coordination with local library including on site WIC libraries and reading logs. • Partnership with Salinas Adult School to offer parent education.
<p>Northeast Valley Health Corporation Kathy Chraghchian Joy Ahrens (818) 898-1388x115 Kathyc-wic@nevhc.org</p>	<p>Family Fun</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCE lesson plans and training provided to Head Start. • Internal collaboration with agency's Camp WIC program for WIC children.
<p>Public Health Foundation Enterprises Gauri Rao (626) 856-6650 x213 Gauri@phfewic.org</p>	<p>Family Circle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination with state preschool. • FCE at two sites.
<p>County of Riverside Health Services Agency Perveen Ali Nancy Allende (909) 358-5311 pali@ext.dhs.ca.gov</p>	<p>Fun with Families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination with library staff to read to children in WIC waiting rooms and offer incentives for reading logs. • Consulted with library for nutrition book displays at library. • Coordinated with Head Start and California <i>Nutrition Network</i> to offer FCE activities at preschools.

Local WIC Agency	Collaboration Project
<p>San Mateo County Department of Health Services Mary Loretta Rose Heather Salas (650) 578-7157 amlrose@aol.com</p>	<p>Summer Fun</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated with library staff to read to children in WIC waiting rooms. • Received training from library on how to read to children.
<p>Sonoma County Department of Health Services Carol Kronberg (707) 565-6595 Ckronber@Sonoma-county.org</p>	<p>Bye Bye Bottle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnered with children’s health center to develop a FCE style lesson plan aimed at reducing anemia. • Developed a sing along book in English and Spanish with photos of WIC children.

Field Testing of a New FCE Lesson Plan: Eating the Rainbow...At the Farmer’s Market

The purpose of the lesson plan “Eating the Rainbow at the Farmers’ Market” was to encourage families to buy produce at Farmers’ Markets and to include a variety of fruits and vegetables in their diet. The lesson plan included introductory music, a warm-up discussion, a book sharing of “Market Day”, a family activity in which families created a rainbow of fruits and vegetables, and discussion ideas for activities to do at home.

The field testing was conducted at three local WIC agencies (Monterey, Northeast Valley, and Riverside) and included evaluations from 270 parents and 23 nutrition educators.



Results, Findings and Recommendations:

- **Interest and support** for FCE-style group education sessions were similar to results from previous FCE field and pilot tests. Most parents (82%) rated the class as very useful, and 95% would attend another FCE class. Most local WIC agency nutrition educators (80%) rated the class highly.
- **Lesson plan needed streamlining.** Suggestions included focusing on either Eating the Rainbow, or Farmers' Market aspects, using more pair work, simplifying activities, and offering more book choices.
- **Guidelines for FCE lesson design needed.** Since experienced educators prefer to revise or develop their own FCE curricula, they could use guidelines for FCE lesson plans.
- **Shared resources were helpful to local agencies.** Experienced local WIC agencies would benefit from access to ideas and resources from other agencies.



Parent Assessment Data:

- **Process:** LeadAmerica conducted individual interviews with 335 WIC parents (in English and Spanish) at Monterey County, Northeast Valley Health Corporation, and Riverside County WIC programs. The interviews focused on parent behaviors and their needs that related to school readiness.

Results and Implications of Parent Interviews:

- **WIC families were not receiving support for school readiness.** Only 27% of these WIC families had access to preschools for their children. In general, the WIC parent served as the “primary” teacher until kindergarten.
- **WIC parents did not have resources to prepare children for school.** About one third (35%) of the WIC families interviewed had 10 or less children’s books in their house. Many (47%) of the families did not subscribe to even one newspaper or magazine, and 31% of the families reported never reading for themselves. Of particular note, 33% of the families reported having the TV on in their house for six or more hours (50% for 3-5 hours).
- **Families felt that WIC should provide school readiness activities.** Many parents expected WIC to share with them how to prepare their children for school and felt it was important for WIC to offer opportunities for reading books with their children.



Resource Development for Implementing FCE

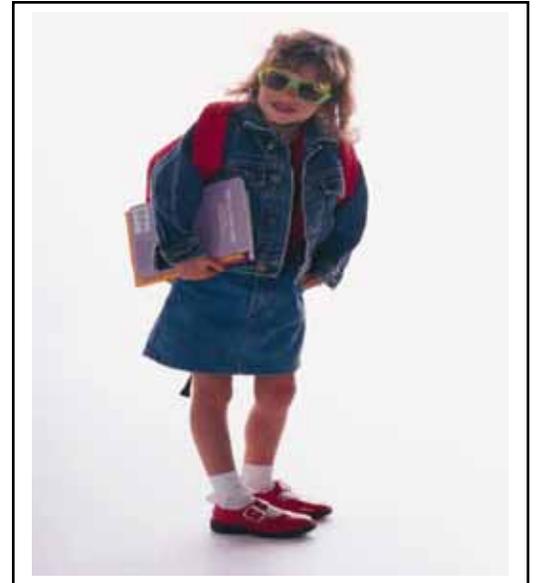
Lesson Plans: The six local WIC agencies also enhanced FCE within their agencies by expanding FCE to more of their WIC sites, and by increasing the number of FCE group sessions they offered to WIC families. In total, approximately 20,000 WIC families participated in FCE group sessions from May through September 2003, at 41 WIC sites.

Ten new FCE lesson plans were developed by local WIC agencies:

- “Let’s Get Moving”, “Planting a Love of Reading”, and “Eat Your Colors”, (adaptation of California WIC lesson plan “Eating the Rainbow”), Monterey County.
- “Eating the Rainbow”, (adaptation of California WIC lesson plan) with WIC coloring book, Northeast Valley Health Corporation.
- “Summer Fun”, San Mateo County.
- “Children and Weight”, “Immunizations”, and “5 a Day the Color Way”, (adaptation of California WIC lesson plan), Riverside County Community.
- “Family Fun at the Market”, (adaptation of California WIC lesson plan) “Grocery Shopping with the Family”, PHFE.
- “Bye Bye Bottle”, Sonoma County.

Resources for FCE Implementation and for Community Collaboration: LeadAmerica, with Consultation from the six participating local WIC agencies, developed resources for other local WIC agencies to use when developing their own FCE activities. These resources are:

- “Starting Family-Centered Education in Your Agency: A Practical Guide for Leaders”
- “FCE Staff Training”
- “How to Set Up a WIC Library at Your WIC Agency” (from Monterey County, currently in outline form)

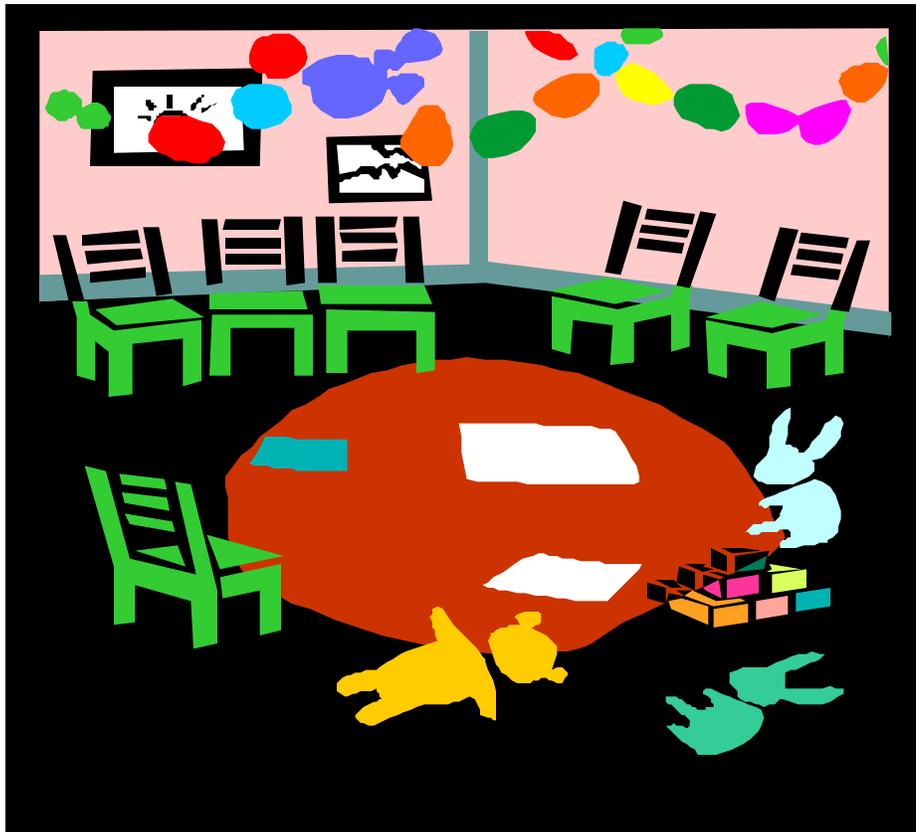


Feedback and Recommendations: The six local WIC agencies selected for this project had at least a year’s experience in implementing FCE in their agencies and most had extensive experience collaborating during other WIC related projects. The agencies were given flexibility developing the project or scope, and in determining their FCE collaboration partners and goals resulting in a wide variety of project outcomes. Overall, the participating local WIC agencies achieved their goals and objectives for expanding FCE within their agencies.

In terms of their success with collaboration, most of the local agencies made significant progress in working with their partners, but they found that the project time frame was too short to evaluate the sustainability of these collaborations. However, all the agencies felt that collaboration appears to be a promising approach for WIC FCE.

LeadAmerica recommends that the California WIC Program encourage collaborative approaches to FCE for local WIC agencies that have completed a startup phase of FCE implementation and are now ready to take on new challenges. Recommendations to encourage collaborations are:

- Develop and distribute procedures for collaborating with local libraries.
- Distribute a finalized version of “How to Set Up a WIC Library at Your WIC Agency”.
- Develop and distribute collaboration guidelines for Head Start/Preschools.
- Evaluate and distribute the “Bye Bye Bottle” lesson plan.
- Re-evaluate parent involvement to determine more successful ways to involve parents. All six of the agencies experienced many challenges in getting parents to participate in the decision making process for FCE.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTINUED FCE PROGRAM SUCCESS

To ensure California WIC's FCE program success and sustainability, these next steps are recommended. The steps are described around three categories of local WIC agencies shown on the diagram:

- FCE Program Support - All Agencies
- Agencies "New" to FCE
- Agencies with FCE "Experience"



FCE Program Support -- All Agencies

California WIC provides leadership to local WIC agencies within the state. All local WIC agencies in California would benefit from the California WIC Program providing overall support and resources for FCE. Some ways for the state to provide this overall support is to:

Commit to FCE Value:

- **Address Parent Needs:** The data shows that there is a continued need by WIC parents for information and skills provided through Family-Centered Education. With little access to preschools, WIC families rely on their relationships with WIC agencies for guidance and support for parenting their children in terms of both health practices and school readiness practices.
- **Address Parent Expectations:** The parent data also indicated strong expectations that WIC provide access to information and support to help them become successful “first” teachers of their children.
- **Model Return on Investment:** Since FCE reaches multiple goals of providing support for improved school readiness skills in the context of providing quality nutrition education; its “Return on Investment” (ROI) of dollars and effort is significant. In times when government is pushed to provide better return on invested dollars, FCE serves as a successful model.

Establish FCE Standards:

- **Establish Standardization of FCE practices:** State WIC has an important role in establishing standards and criteria for FCE practices including approved FCE lesson plans, minimum length of lessons, etc. Since many agencies often adapt state developed FCE lesson plans to fit their local needs, care must be taken to retain FCE principles.
- **Establish Guidelines for FCE Implementation:** State WIC leadership in establishing and communicating guidelines for various levels of FCE implementation is critical to FCE success. For example, the State could devise and distribute guidelines on how to design FCE classes.

Develop Systems for Local WIC Agency Access to FCE Ideas:

- **Share More Local WIC Agency FCE Resources:** State WIC already has an FCE section on their California WIC web site, which includes state developed FCE lessons plans, a list of recommended children’s books, and FCE reports. The California WIC Program also distributes an electronic FCE newsletter to the twenty local WIC agencies that have participated in either phase of FCE. The newsletter features highlights of FCE-related activities, lesson plans, and places to find FCE books and materials. A recommendation for the state is to add to local WIC agency FCE program ideas and lesson components on the state web site.

- **Provide FCE Kits:** Based on FCE local WIC agency project leader suggestions, we recommend that State WIC provide kits of materials for FCE lessons after an agency has selected a particular lesson to implement. The kit would include one sample item for everything needed to conduct the FCE lesson and include the name and address of the supplier and a cost sheet. Depending upon State resources, a kit could be distributed to all agencies or be available for lending.
- **Maintain Contact List:** Develop a statewide contact list of FCE local WIC Agency Project Leaders. When a new agency is considering FCE in their agency, that agency could be matched with someone on the contact list.



Agencies “New” to FCE

Agencies who are new to FCE have specific needs. We recommend the following actions for the state program to ensure FCE success:

Provide Guidance for FCE Implementation:

- **Provide FCE “Start Up” Guidelines:** Develop and distribute a “Starting Family - Centered Education in Your Agency: A Practical Guide for Leaders” to each interested agency which includes action steps and helpful tips for getting started on FCE.
- **Clarify Services and Support Available:** Determine what services the state can provide to help agencies get started in FCE.
- **Clarify FCE Terminology:** The terminology for various kinds of nutrition education can be confusing to staff. It would be helpful for the state to develop a glossary of terms frequently used to describe the delivery of nutrition education.

Provide FCE Staff Training:

- **Offer FCE Staff Training:** One of the most consistent findings from FCE Phase 2 is that agencies offering FCE to WIC participants need to provide staff training to all educators conducting FCE classes. The staff training should focus on specific skills used in FCE group sessions, as well as some background on FCE. This training could either be provided by the state or by the local WIC agency.
- **Provide FCE Agency Project Leader Training:** The California WIC Program should consider providing training for the FCE Project Leaders, to include information in “Starting FCE in Your Program,” as well as tips on accessing support via the California WIC web site, and resources for designing FCE lessons.

Provide Access to FCE Resources and Mentors:

- **Provide Access to FCE Resources:** Agencies that are new to FCE need easy access to FCE curricula, materials lists, and shared ideas for FCE success. The WIC website can serve as the “meeting” point for gaining access to these items.
- **Provide Access to FCE Mentors:** Agencies new to FCE also need personal support. A system whereby a new agency is paired with an FCE “mentor” could provide such support without reliance on State WIC personnel.

Agencies with FCE “Experience”

Agencies who have successfully implemented and integrated FCE into their agency's educational activities could be guided to move to the next level in FCE implementation. We recommend the following actions for the state program to undertake for agencies experienced in FCE:

- **Provide Guidance for FCE Community Collaboration Models--Distribute FCE Collaboration Action Steps:** Develop and distribute “Action Steps” for implementing FCE Community Collaborations, such as with local libraries and/or Head Start preschools.
- **Provide Guidance for Expanded FCE Service Models--Distribute Action Steps/Tip Sheets for Expanded FCE Services:** Provide detailed Action Steps or Tip Sheets for agencies that want to provide additional services within their agencies. Examples include how to start WIC site libraries or offer FCE through individual education sessions.

Provide Support for Experimentation and Shared Success:

- **Provide Support for Experimentation:** Additional funding for projects, such as for the collaborations in this project, FCE Phase 2 allows agencies to creatively experiment with FCE programs and services, and allows the State to develop models for other agencies to use. The California WIC Program received an operational adjustment grant from USDA to provide grants and support to local agencies for this community collaboration phase. Contingent on funding realities and the availability of discretionary and external funding sources, more grants could be offered for FCE projects.
- **Provide Access to Other Experienced FCE Project Leaders:** Provide opportunities at WIC conferences or through separate WIC meetings for all FCE practitioners to meet to share ideas and resources. Develop a coalition of experienced FCE practitioners and collaborators to share ideas with others at their level of FCE expertise.

Acknowledgements:

The California WIC Program wishes to acknowledge the following local WIC agencies and their FCE Project Leaders for their creativity, passion, hard work, commitment, and leadership in this FCE project. Many of the agencies also participated actively in both field and pilot test phases of this project. The individuals at each agency truly shaped FCE as it evolved in California.

Michelle Fox, Monterey County Department of Health

Kathy Chraghchian, Northeast Valley Health Corporation

Gauri Rao, Public Health Foundation Enterprises

Perveen Ali, Nancy Allende, Gayle Hoxter, and Marsie Huling, Riverside County Community Health Agency

Mary Loretta Rose and Heather Salas, San Mateo County Health Services

Carol Kronberg, Sonoma County Department of Health Services

Much appreciation is also extended to the following California WIC Program staff:

Heather Reed for her leadership and coordination of the project and her work with local WIC agencies. **Kim Wietsma** of the California WIC Program staff for her work in overseeing and administering the contractual process in concert with **Samar MacGregor** from PHFE WIC. **Linnea Sallack**, California WIC Program Branch Chief, **Carol Chase**, Chief of Nutrition and Breastfeeding Education and Training Section, and especially **Kim Frinzell** of the Training and Career Development Unit, for her management support of the project.

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