

Special Needs Project Evaluation Proposal

Overview Staff will evaluate the First 5 California Special Needs Project (SNP) to determine whether the demonstration sites collectively and individually:

- Met the Request for Application (RFA) objectives, and
- Focused on the RFA emphasis areas.

After staff determines which demonstration sites showed the strongest performance, they will target those sites for case studies to identify best practices related to specific objective and emphasis areas.

Objectives The RFA includes four objectives for SNP:

1. Improve school readiness for children with disabilities and other special needs and their families.
2. Promote strategies and practices that improve early identification and intervention for children from diverse backgrounds with disabilities, behavioral/mental health concerns, and other special needs.
3. Strengthen the School Readiness Initiative and other First 5 California programs, including Preschool for All and Health Access for All.
4. Produce evaluation results for evidence-based practices that will serve as a foundation for future program improvement and advocacy efforts.

Emphasis areas The RFA includes four areas of emphasis on which each demonstration site should focus:

1. Universal access to screening for early identification and referrals for physical and developmental issues, including social, emotional, and behavioral issues.
2. Improved access to and utilization of services and supports through coordination and reallocation of existing resources and building of new resources.
3. Inclusion of young children with disabilities and other special needs in appropriate, typical child care and development and other community settings with provision of necessary support to help the child succeed in these environments.
4. Evaluation to determine effective practices and to improve programs' capacity to include young children with disabilities and other special needs.

Continued on next page

Special Needs Project Evaluation Proposal, cont.

Evaluation components

First 5 California staff will lead the evaluation, coordinating and summarizing the work of contractors, when appropriate. Staff will coordinate the following evaluation components:

1. Proposition 10 Evaluation Data System (PEDS) Data
 2. School Readiness Program Survey
 3. Qualitative Analysis
 4. Family Survey (multiple languages)
 5. Case Studies
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PEDS data

Staff will use PEDS data to answer the following questions related to the SNP objectives and emphasis areas:

1. What percent of children receive screenings?
 2. What are the ages of children receiving screenings?
 3. What percent of children receive pre-referral intervention and/or follow-up and/or services and interventions?
 4. What percent of children receive diagnoses? By diagnosis, age, sex, ethnicity (if sufficient numbers)?
 5. What combination of screenings is most effective for detecting possible concerns?
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School Readiness survey

Staff will use a School Readiness survey to answer the following types of questions related to the SNP objectives and emphasis areas:

1. Does the site have any preschool programs in which children with special needs are included?
 2. What percent of children in this program have special needs?
 3. How does the program appropriately accommodate these children?
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Qualitative analysis

Staff will work with the SNP technical assistance contractor to develop qualitative protocol to evaluate whether SNP sites are:

1. Including young children with disabilities and other special needs in appropriate, typical child care.
 2. Improving access to and utilization of services and supports through coordination and reallocation of existing resources and building of new resources.
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Special Needs Project Evaluation Proposal, cont.

Family survey

Staff will use a family survey to answer the following types of questions related to the SNP objectives and emphasis areas:

1. Do diagnosed child have an Individualized Educational Plan or a transition to kindergarten plan?
2. How important do families find early screening and why do they think it is important?
3. Do families get information about how to help their child develop?
4. Does the program provide families with activities to do at home? What activities? If so, does the family do those activities at home?
5. Do families feel that the program works with the family to meet their needs? (highlight language & culture)
6. Do families feel program staff treat their child well?
7. Does the program staff understand the family's language and culture?
8. Do the program hours meet the family's needs?
9. Does the family find transportation to and from the program convenient?

Case studies

After staff determines which demonstration sites showed the strongest performance, they will target those sites for case studies to identify best practices related to:

1. Screening children early
 2. Referring and following up with children
 3. Meeting families' needs
 4. Integrating with SR programs
 5. Improving systems integration
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