ABSTRACT

STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF THE LINKAGES PROGRAM IMPLEMENTED IN MADERA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

In 2003, Madera County Department of Social Services joined the second phase of California’s Linkages Program. Since 2003, Madera County has worked to create a Linkages Program design that would meet the specific needs of the county and its clients. Gradually, the department is bringing Linkages into full implementation. The purpose of the following study was to identify the perceptions of Madera County Department of Social Services/Child Welfare and Welfare to Work staff regarding the program, its implementation, and its utility. To accomplish this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine staff members from both divisions and from different promotion levels. The findings of this study suggest that, despite expressed needs for further training on procedure and possible benefits, informants have a positive perception of Linkages and have ideas to contribute regarding the future direction of the program.

Amber Jill Davis
May 2009
STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF THE LINKAGES PROGRAM
IMPLEMENTED IN MADERA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

by
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A thesis
submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Social Work
in the College of Health and Human Services
California State University, Fresno
May 2009
APPROVED

For the Department of Social Work Education:

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I don’t know that me rising to this level was ever a question in my family’s mind. I have always been fortunate to receive messages of unconditional confidence and support, as though my success was an expectation, from my friends and family. Now that I am graduating with a master’s degree and have written a thesis to show off all my learning and academic prowess (inserting tongue in cheek now), I hope that it meets their expectations, and that they deem this work to be interesting, provocative, and well-seasoned.

Thank You, God, for keeping me focused and helping me remember that the path I wish to follow is the one You created for me.

Mom, Dad, Aunt Lorna, and Uncle Richard, or as I see you, my parental entourage: Thank you for building me up and making me strong. Because of your encouragement and messages of faith, my dreams have no limits, and I fear no culminating experience!!! The work I do makes me aware of just how precious that kind of love and support is. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I hope the work I set out to do with this degree will make you proud.

Brian, or C.W.: thanks for keeping me grounded and aware of how smart I’m not. It’s always important to have that balance, and you did your duty as a little brother in making sure I had it. Thank you for those phone conversations about other life issues. They helped me remember that there is life outside of my textbooks. A fact I often forgot over the last two years.

Thank you, Madera DSS for allowing me to conduct my research at your agency.

Kat, Jen, Ally: you remind me of the Babe!
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The complex and confounding overlap between child abuse and poverty is increasingly apparent as a growing number of clients are shared between child welfare and public assistance agencies (e.g., Connell-Carrick & Scannapieco, 2006; Frederick & Goddard, 2007; Freisthler, Bruce, & Needell, 2007; Leschied, Chiodo, Whitehead, & Hurley, 2006; Thomas, 2007). To address this connection in consumer needs, the Linkages Program was developed to coordinate the efforts of public assistance programs with those of child abuse prevention and intervention programs. In 2003, Madera County Department of Social Services, specifically Child Welfare Services and Welfare to Work, joined California’s Linkages implementation plan and is 1 of 29 counties participating in the state (CalWORKS/Child Welfare Partnership Project, 2004). Other counties have adapted Linkages to fit the needs of their clients and have successfully implemented the program. Currently, Madera County is in the process of gradually implementing, phase-by-phase, the policy and procedural guidelines of its Linkages Program design.

Identification of the Problem

A number of factors can influence staff perceptions of a newly implemented program. In addition to the change in or addition to established work duties, staff’s perceptions of the need for the new program and the benefits to be received can affect the way staff experience this change. Worker buy-in is crucial in making changes on the front lines of service delivery. The Linkages Program
was designed to benefit social service agencies and clients, alike. To encourage staff buy-in, workers must be informed of the existing problem and how the new program will mitigate these concerns. Adequate training on the program’s mission, its procedures, and how the new program relates to the overall goal of the division is necessary for a successful transition.

Currently, Madera County has an active policy and procedure guideline for Linkages that describes in detail how Linkages should be utilized in each unit of the Child Welfare and Welfare to Work divisions. Gradually, more and more staff are being trained on and exposed to the Linkages-eligible referrals and cases. Efforts to involve further divisions of the department in information sharing and joint case planning are in progress. Using standpoint theory as the conceptual lens, this study explored the perceptions of Madera County Child Welfare and Welfare to Work staff regarding the need for the Linkages Program, the benefits that they see in employing a coordinated services program design, and their ideas of what direction they would like to see the Linkages Program take in the future.

**Theoretical Literature**

Standpoint theory explains that while each person has a point of view, some people are “cognitively privileged” due to their experiences and the insights gained there from (Cameron, 2005). People’s insights shape their views of events. This theory, which generally refers to women as its focal population, is applied herein to the population of Madera County Department of Social Services staff. Following the idea that the information people gain from experience shapes their schema, or organizational or conceptual framework, this study explored the schemata of Madera County Department of Social Services staff from different ranks regarding the Linkages Program, and explored staff perceptions of the
benefits and usefulness of this program, as well as their perceptions of this program’s implementation in Madera County.

A number of studies highlight the effectiveness of coordinated case planning in providing optimum service to clients, and an abundance of literature is available online that can be used for technical assistance in developing and adapting the Linkages Program. If this information does not get effectively relayed to line staff from administrators and Linkage committee members, those staff members who are not directly involved with the planning and implementation of Linkages will not be adequately informed on the purpose or importance of the program, or on how to correctly follow program procedure.

Insight is communicative (Cameron, 2005). Insight that is held by one individual can be shared to raise awareness of a topic. Staff who are well informed may see the value of the Linkages Program and may then pass information to their peers and subordinates. When line staff receive the information, it has been filtered and undoubtedly contains some of the sentiments from those relaying the message. Together with information gathered from their own field experience, these factors shape the views of the information recipients. If line staff view their roles to be clear and their job duties to be closely aligned with the goal of the agency and division, they are more likely to develop an appreciation for the new directives and to comply with less resistance (Holloway & Brager, 1989). Contrarily, staff who do not have a clear understanding of the policies, procedures, and benefits of a new program may be likely to develop negative schemata and react with resistance. This resistance can undermine and sabotage efforts at program implementation, especially when widely spread among line staff who are ultimately responsible for utilizing program guidelines in their work with clients.
Much of the literature on standpoint theory suggests that people with common interests and knowledge can be unified and that, once unified, collective action is possible (Hardina, 2002; New, 1998). With this idea, if program information is effectively and thoroughly distributed to staff, the resultant understanding can generate a united effort to implement Linkages and make positive changes to the face of service delivery in Madera County. Conversely, if information on the importance and benefits of the Linkages Program are not effectively conveyed to staff and negative schemata are formed regarding the program and its work requirements, staff may unite in counterproductive opposition.

**Empirical Literature**

Many of the articles reviewed in preparation for this study regarding coordinated efforts were qualitative in nature and involved interviews with key stakeholders who were reputable for their knowledge in the focal subject area. The studies reviewed carried one major theme in their findings: unification is essential for collective action (Cameron, 2005; Hamilton, 2007; Van Zomeren, Spears, & Leach, 2008). Drawing attention to common interests or experience and fostering a sense of group identity is important in moving forward with collective action. It is also important to keep those affected by agency movements informed of changes and activities (Kezar, 2008). Making sure stakeholders and team members have all information available regarding planning and implementation of a new program will increase the uniformity in motion toward the program goal.

A wide body of literature covering the cooccurrence of poverty and child maltreatment was also reviewed (e.g., Frederick & Goddard, 2007; Freisthler et al., 2007). Several key concepts arise from the articles that were reviewed. Most
important is a call for a multisystems level and ecological analyses to be conducted to better understand the multiple factors associated with poverty and child abuse. The authors discuss the complexity of child abuse and poverty and explain the importance of taking a comprehensive approach to study.

A review of literature regarding coordinated case planning was also conducted. While no studies were found that specifically addressed linking child welfare with public assistance, the coordination of other public services was considered. In the quantitative studies reviewed, the results indicate that coordinated service provision is an effective means of providing optimum service to clients (Bremer, Weist, Adelman, Taylor, & Vernon-Smiley, 2007; Druss et al., 2006).

**Methodology**

The following qualitative study focused on the perceptions and knowledge of Madera County Department of Social Services Child Welfare and Welfare to Work staff regarding the Linkages Program and its implementation. The goal was to explore staff’s views of the need for and benefits of the Linkages Program as it is implemented in Madera County, as well as to identify staff’s ideas on directions Linkages should explore. To accomplish this, individual interviews were conducted with staff members from Madera County Department of Social Services administrative, supervisory, and line staff levels from both Welfare to Work and Child Welfare divisions. Participants were identified by their superiors as having knowledge of or experience working with Madera County’s Linkages Program.

Because Linkages is a relatively new innovation, there are no long-term studies on its effectiveness, nor have any studies been conducted specific to the experience of implementing the program at the county level. This study examined
a topic unique to Madera County, the nature of which could not be captured through quantitative analysis. A qualitative study was necessary to explicate the commonalities in experiences and perceptions among caseworkers involved in Linkages. Interviews uncovered staff perceptions of implementation at all levels of Madera County Department of Social Services, training, and the communication of insight related to Linkages, basic understandings of Linkages, staff’s perceptions of the program’s value, and other suggestions staff have regarding Linkages Program implementation and direction.

Summary

The goal of the Linkages Program is to unify the efforts made by case managers in both Child Welfare Services and Welfare to Work to provide optimum service for clients to help them become healthy and self-sufficient, and to reduce duplication of services. In order for a new program to be successfully implemented, staff must have a full understanding of the need for change, as well as a concept of the expected benefits. Also, before a collective movement for change can occur, a degree of unity through the identification of a common goal is necessary. This study will give voice to those staff members involved in the planning and/or implementation of Linkages in an effort to understand staff’s view of the Linkages Program and its implementation.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Since the inception of child welfare agencies, child welfare social workers have fought to improve the lives of children and families by eradicating child abuse and neglect. In a parallel process, eligibility workers in public assistance agencies have worked to improve the quality of life for families living under the federal poverty level. As case managers in each agency labor to meet their clients’ needs, they often encounter an overlap in the efforts made to eradicate child maltreatment and those made to help families living in poverty.

An ever-increasing body of literature illuminates the frequent cooccurrence of poverty and child maltreatment (Connell-Carrick & Scannapieco, 2006; Frederick & Goddard, 2007; Freisthler et al., 2007; Leschied et al., 2006; Thomas, 2007). While the studies reviewed focus on the overlap in poverty and child maltreatment, they do not assert that poverty causes child maltreatment, nor do they express that this cooccurrence is eminent and absolute.

As a result of the existing overlap in many child welfare and public assistance cases, case plans designed by case managers to address one of these areas of concern often mirror those designed by case managers addressing the other. The resulting duplication of services can be both confusing and daunting for clients. In order to receive services from public assistance or from child welfare, clients are responsible for completing a list of activities within a given timeframe. Many of these requirements are complicated and time-consuming in their own right; and, when taken together with a service plan from another
division, successful completion of both case plans can seem impossible. Unfortunately, if these families do not comply with their case plans for child welfare they will not be reunited with their children; if they do not comply with their case plan for public assistance, they will face sanctions.

The overlap in service provision to clients can also be costly for the county. One small example of this duplication is seen when a family receives bus tokens for transportation from both child welfare and public assistance as part of their service plans. Increased communication among departments within social service agencies would decrease this overpayment and would ensure clients’ service plans address dual involvement by county departments in an effort to eliminate poverty and to eradicate child maltreatment.

Another excess cost arises when services for families are offered in an order that does not reflect the family’s complex needs. If a family is struggling with issues of depression and substance abuse, it may not benefit the family to receive job placement services or parenting classes until they receive the benefits of counseling and have addressed their mental health and substance abuse issues. When services are offered in a way that does not ultimately benefit the family, the funding used to provide those services is essentially wasted. Collaboration between Child Welfare Services and Welfare to Work is intended to permit a crucial exchange of information to help workers from both divisions better assess their clients and create a case plan that more accurately addresses the specific needs of each family. This new means of service provision differs drastically from methods used in the past.
Historical Context

Historically, county agencies have taken a top down approach to services, designing a list of services, or expectations, for clients to complete without allowing them the opportunity to give input to the process. In 2002, a study by Timmons, Schuster, Hamner, and Bose introduced five key elements identified by social service consumers as being important in successful service delivery. Coordinated services and access to resources were among those factors identified as essential. The Linkages Program aligns dual service provisions and promotes a
multisystems level and person-in-environment perspective for case managers when assessing clients. In order for case managers to fully understand clients’ needs, they must first be able to accurately assess clients’ circumstances and the different levels of hardship influencing them. Also, with a unified approach to service provision, social services and child welfare workers can collaborate to ensure clients are receiving all the help available to complete their case plans and reach their goals.

A number of studies, across disciplines, address the benefits of providing coordinated services for clients (Druss et al., 2006; Feierabend & Bartee, 2004; Timmons et al., 2002). One such article by Bremer et al. (2007) reported the findings of a study on the importance of linking mental health services with children’s education. The article discussed the effects of mental health problems on children’s abilities to adequately perform in school. The results of the focal study highlighted the significance of the linkage between schools and community-based mental health providers in meeting the needs of the targeted population to help them succeed academically. Linkages implements this same strategy, unifying child welfare and public assistance to eliminate some of the economic factors correlated with child abuse, thereby helping families succeed.

Conceptual Framework

While the benefits of interdisciplinary collaboration are made evident through the empirical research, the actual implementation of linkage programs can prove to be difficult. There are a number of obstacles that can impede progress toward communication and teamwork between county departments. Program implementation is a process of transition for those involved and it entails ongoing evaluation and change. Bureaucratic agencies are often static, making change a
slow and arduous process. Administrative approval of changes can take months or even years to be obtained; and, once approved, with caseloads so high, workers are not often receptive to changes in work duties that may entail additional paperwork. Some concerns that arise in implementing the Linkages Program include how to promote collaboration among service divisions, how to address client confidentiality among multiple case managers, how to clarify worker and division roles in coordinated case planning, and how to work with rigid funding sources (CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project, 2001).

Currently, those counties participating in the Linkages Project are practicing one or a mixture of three different Linkage Program models. These models are the coordinated case-planning model, the intensive services unit model, and the one-door model. The model used in Madera County is in the process of implementing a coordinated case-planning model, facilitated by partial collocation of Child Welfare Services with some of the Welfare to Work units.

In Madera County, there are many staff members involved with the Linkages planning and implementation process. The Linkages Program was introduced in Madera County in 2003. Today, Madera County is continuing to work with Linkages, reassessing and making changes where necessary to better fit the population served, as well as the staff members involved in its delivery.

Previous studies on implementing organizational or societal change have shown three major commonalities. First, action can be achieved through unity. Second, unity can be achieved through shared insight. Third, leaders can facilitate change by relating new action to the mission of the organization (Cameron, 2005; Hamilton, 2007; Holloway & Brager, 1989; Kezar, 2008; Van Zomeren et al., 2008).
Each person has his or her own standpoint, or view of organizational issues and of what changes are needed. These schemata are shaped by each person’s life and organizational experiences. According to feminist standpoint theory, these experiential insights can be shared. Because knowledge is communicable, people who have exposure to the same information are better able to take collective action toward a common goal (Cameron, 2005).

Common knowledge and experience are what create a group’s *entatifativity*, or cohesiveness. The stronger the members’ group identity, the more likely they are to take collective action for change (Hamilton, 2007; Van Zomeren et al., 2008). However, knowledge in an agency can be political. Politics can determine the way problems are defined in an agency and the definition of the problem determines the solution implemented. Different interest groups compete over resources and priorities. Conflicts often result in stagnation, as the dominant group resists change (Kezar, 2008).

Supervisors, managers, or other leaders can facilitate organizational change by illuminating the similarities between groups’ and members’ interests and by relating problem solutions to the agency’s overall focus (Holloway & Brager, 1989).

**Theoretical/Conceptual Literature**

Seven sources, including books and articles on social and/or organizational change, were reviewed. However, not all seven were empirical. All of the sources reviewed convey an agreement that organizational or social change is possible through group member unification. However, one article questions the feasibility of sharing knowledge without sharing experiences, taking into account diversity (New, 1998). Three of the sources reviewed discuss ways to facilitate change and
overcome resistance. Most commonly mentioned were the fostering of group identity and the importance of strong leadership during transition.

The Importance of Group Identity

A number of studies focus on the effect that group identity can have on group efficacy and group outcomes. A study by Nelson et al. (2008) explored predictors of collective action. The results of this study confirm the major tenets of Social Identity Theory. A collective orientation is strongly correlated with group action. In this study, 282 surveys were analyzed to determine the extent of group identity, as feminist, and to determine predictors of collective action on behalf of this group.

A group is an agent to impact the social environment. Brought together by similarities in agency, or function, the group can enact goal-directed behavior (Hamilton, 2007). To strengthen the group’s cohesion, similarities in function and interest must be emphasized.

According to these articles, those who identify strongly as a member of a group have a greater sense of intrinsic motivation and of commitment to the mission of that group and are more likely to adopt the group’s agenda. Ideas on issues can be taught, increasing the uniformity of cognition, and the unity in action.

The Role of Leadership in Organizational Transformation

Strong leadership is important in organizational change. In a book by Holloway and Brager (1989), the role of the supervisor is discussed. Supervisors are responsible for providing clarity on objectives. As the organization transitions, supervisors must support staff and elucidate the relationship between tasks and the
organization’s purpose. Also, leaders who clarify objectives will appear to approach tasks with purposive behavior. It is this approach that will increase the likelihood that the objectives will be completed and the overall desired outcome will be reached. In leading others in purposive behavior, a stronger group identity is fostered. With the entire group working in unison, the group’s goal is more likely to be achieved.

Similarly, Kezar (2008) discusses the role of leaders in institutional change. These leaders have the ability to encourage institutional commitment, or group entatativity, by making the connection between the agenda for change and the institutional mission.

Gaps in Literature

While addressed to some extent by Cameron (2005), more focus should be given to the differences in ways of knowing. Feminist standpoint theory holds that people can share the same cognitive privilege by virtue of a shared characteristic, because that characteristic will shape the way they experience events, which will in turn shape their schemata regarding that event. However, with an innumerable degree of influential characteristics, how can the presence of one commonality override the presence of so many differences in characteristics? It is hard to believe that two people can share the same insight, having not shared the same experiences. Not enough credence is given to this rival stance.

Also, to suggest that members of a group will necessarily take to action on behalf of that group is overly generalized. It does not seem that the nature of every group entity would permit or necessitate group action. In addition, group action would suggest a degree of group loyalty, a concept beyond mere group
identity. A more comprehensive analysis of group psychology is needed to balance the idealistic themes presented in existing literature.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of and Rationale for This Study

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to identify staff perceptions of the need for and progress in implementation of the Linkages Program in Madera County. This study explored the attitudes of several of the staff who are involved in Linkages implementation and in the resulting intra-agency coordination. This exploratory study examined three principal research questions: (a) What key factors do staff from the Madera County Department of Social Services Child Welfare and Welfare to Work divisions feel affect the progress in the implementation of the Linkages Program? (b) How do staff understand the purpose of the Linkages Program and its relation to the department’s mission? (c) Are there other directions that the Linkages Program should take?

Identifying obstacles to optimum service provision is important. The better the quality of services provided, the more likely clients are to succeed in becoming healthy and independent. Also, implementation of a new program requires staff buy-in, fueled by an understanding of the connection between a new task and the overall unit or agency goal. This study gave voice to the opinions of some of the staff who are involved in the Linkages process regarding their perceptions of the need for coordinated case planning, the progress made in implementing the Linkages Program in Madera County Social Services, and further areas that can be addressed in the Linkages Program that could benefit clients.
Informants

Permission was granted by the Madera County Department of Social Services (see Appendix A) and by the Department of Social Work’s Human Subjects Review Board at California State University, Fresno (see Appendix B) to interview nine Madera County Department of Social Services employees of who are in positions that are either directly or indirectly involved in the design and/or implementation of the Linkages Program for the county. Interviews were semi-structured and a list of questions was used to guide interviews (see Appendix C). One informant represented the department’s administration; two informants represented the management level; two informants represented the supervisory level, one from Welfare to Work and one from Child Welfare; and the remaining four informants represented the line staff, two from Welfare to Work and two from Child Welfare. Each informant was identified by his or her superiors as having knowledge on Linkages in Madera County. Participation in this study was voluntary. Participants in this study included staff from administration involved in the creation of a Linkages Program designed for Madera County, managers and supervisors who are charged with implementing the policies and procedures designed, and line staff who are required to utilize designated Linkages procedures in the course of their work with clients. Of the nine informants who participated in this study, four are members of the Linkages team at Madera County that was developed as an ongoing task group focused on providing program evaluation and needed adjustments to Linkages. Five of the informants were not involved in the program design, but have a required familiarity with Linkages, either from direct use of Linkages procedures in their work with clients, or from supervising Linkages eligible cases.

The characteristics of chosen informants are shown in Table 1.
Table 1

*Select Characteristics of the Informants*

<table>
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<th>Task Area</th>
<th>Assigned Division</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Welfare to Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Child Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Supervisory</td>
<td>Child Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Supervisory</td>
<td>Welfare to Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Line Staff</td>
<td>Welfare to Work</td>
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<td>Line Staff</td>
<td>Welfare to Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
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<td>Line Staff</td>
<td>Child Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Line Staff</td>
<td>Child Welfare</td>
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**Informed Consent**

Prior to participating, each informant reviewed and signed an informed consent form, approved by the Department of Social Work’s Human Subjects Review Board at California State University, Fresno. This form indicated (a) the purpose of the study, (b) that participation is voluntary, (c) that they can choose to withdraw from participation at any time after initial consent is given, (d) that informants will not be named in the report for this study, (e) the interviews were to be audiotaped, but that participants could decline to be audiotaped and, (f) the potential benefits and risks of participation. Because a variation of purposive sampling was used in this study, generalizability of the results are circumscribed; however, generalization was not a goal of this study.
Confidentiality

In order to maintain confidentiality of the informants, interviews were conducted in private locations, either in the individual informant’s office or in a private location in the department office away from interruption. Interviews were conducted behind closed doors and were recorded onto audiotapes, which stayed solely in this researcher’s possession. Once interviews were completed, transcribed, and analyzed, the interview audiotapes were recorded over with blank audio, completely erasing the data from the informants’ interviews. Additionally, all hard copies containing the transcriptions of the informants’ interviews were shredded upon the completion of this study using a standard file shredder because the information they contained could have been used to identify the informants. Informants were given the option to decline being audiotaped, though none did decline.

Benefits and Risks

There were a number of potential risks and benefits to informants associated with participation in this study. Most important among these is that ideas voiced by participating staff offered a wide array of solutions to existing problems in program implementation, and may have also given program planners information on what some staff feel is working well in the program. These statements may lead to beneficial changes in the future.

Simultaneously, potential risks to informants included being identified among colleagues as a study participant and being associated with a particular viewpoint, correctly or incorrectly. Because the number of department staff is small, regardless of efforts made to maintain participants’ confidentiality, there will always be the possibility that informants may be identified simply due to the small number of staff, and because of the resultant limited number of study
participants. Should this scenario occur, informants might fear retaliation on the part of the department, or by their colleagues.

In order to avoid any risks to informants, measures were taken to ensure, to the fullest extent possible, confidentiality of participants. Also, collected interview data were reviewed and coded by category. Generalizations are thereby drawn and presented as composite summaries rather than specific statements. Data were also member-checked by respondents, allowing each participant the opportunity to clarify any discrepancies in the researcher’s understanding. Statements made during interviews were ascribed to the group and were not identified with any job position.
Chapter 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents information regarding the demographics of the informants and the procedures used to analyze the interview data. The findings of this study, giving focus to the similarities and variations in common areas, are then presented.

Demographics of Informants

For this study, nine Madera County Department of Social Services employees participated in semistructured, qualitative interviews. Each informant had been identified by his or her superiors as having knowledge regarding the Linkages Program in Madera County. The amount of experience working with the county and with the Linkages Program ranged widely among informants, from 1.5 years to 28 years of service. Some informants had been involved in the planning stages of the Linkages Program in Madera County and others had become involved with the program in recent years after implementation began. Of the nine informants, three were men and six were women. Informants represented administration, management, supervisory, and line staff (please refer to Table 1, p. 18).

Data Analysis

Each interview was transcribed and sent back to the informant to be reviewed. This gave the informants the opportunity to ensure that the ideas conveyed in their interview accurately communicated their ideas and desired messages. Once all interviews were cleared by the informants, each was re-read to
draw themes from the written material that were related to the original research questions. Using this list of themes, each interview was once again reviewed to extract statements related to the theme categories. The core of the analysis was to determine commonalities and differences in responses given by informants regarding each of the themes, or codes.

Categories of Analysis and Supporting Data

Six major categories of analysis were derived from the written transcripts. The frequencies with which informants’ comments fell within these code categories are as follows: views of the Linkages Program (9), perceived benefits to clients (9), perceived benefits to the agency/staff (8), number of Linkages-eligible cases (7), areas of implementation that are going well (9), implementation challenges (9). For purposes of confidentiality and due to the small number of informants, direct quotes may be too revealing and are not provided in this analysis. However, to convey the content of the informants’ statements that lend to ideas and themes addressed in this chapter, composite statements were developed.

Results

Perceptions of Linkages

Each of the nine informants gave a slightly different explanation demonstrating their understanding of this program’s purpose and the perceived benefits to staff or the agency, and to clients. All nine informants’ descriptions of Linkages conveyed an understanding that the program’s overall goal was to coordinate services in an effort to provide optimal service to clients. Every informant also indicated that they viewed Linkages as being an important change
to the former unintegrated approach to service provision. One informant described
the coordination involved in Linkages as a necessity in order to increase a family’s
sustainability. This was a common viewpoint, as five other informants identified
the Linkages Program and coordinated services as a means to help families meet
their goals and to become self-sustaining. While each informant gave a positive
depiction of the program and its importance, only two related its goals to the
overall mission of the department, which explains that the focus of the Madera
County Department of Social Services is to work together with other local
agencies to promote the well-being of the community by strengthening families,
providing quality services, and helping clients to become self-sufficient (2008).

Four informants viewed the Linkages Program as being helpful in engaging
clients, encouraging their participation in case plan development and compliance.
Informants explained that the ideal would be to use the helping relationship
established by the Welfare to Work worker as a means to facilitate a
nonthreatening introduction to the Child Welfare worker during a joint home visit.
This form of benign presentation can allow for a helping, rather than adversarial,
relationship to develop between the Child Welfare worker and the family.
According to two of the staff involved in Linkages Program planning, joint home
visits are one of the identified goals for the future. One possible result from the
Linkages Program is that well-trained Child Welfare staff could identify families
who are eligible for Welfare to Work services and can then cross-refer. However,
this was not mentioned by any of the informants interviewed.

Perceived Benefits to Clients

During several interviews, informants described how the coordination from
the Linkages Program can help clients to not feel so overwhelmed. Seven
informants described their perceptions of how coordinating services and designing a joint case plan makes it possible to reduce the number of case plan activities required for a family; and, that the adjusted list of requirements can seem more achievable than the prior unintegrated format. Since the goal is to increase the family’s chances at success, the more confident the family feels about their ability to complete those activities, the more likely they are to give their best efforts at compliance.

Informants also unanimously expressed understanding that many of the families in either the Child Welfare system or the Welfare to Work system are affected by multiple difficulties and have a number of needs. Due to the multiple needs of clients, informants communicated seeing the importance of having other professionals at the decision table to offer information regarding available services to help those families. Substance abuse and mental health issues were two of the challenges experienced by families that were most commonly mentioned by informants. One informant explained, however, that due to a lack of funding and staff the chances of making Behavioral Health Services a regular part of Linkages staffings are small.

**Perceived Benefits of the Linkages Program for the Agency and/or Staff**

Interviews from all informants revealed a uniform appreciation for the open communication and information sharing that occurs as a result of the newly implemented Linkages staffings. Each person described how additional eyes and ears on Linkages-eligible cases and having additional information about families has impacted their work. According to one informant, the more information a worker has the better. Having more information prior to making contact with a
family can help workers make a more accurate assessment that will result in more effective case planning.

Despite having an overall appreciation for the additional information gained through Linkages, statements that conveyed a feeling that Child Welfare staff had more to gain from the collaboration and coordination of Linkages than did Welfare to Work or Eligibility staff were common among informants. Child Welfare workers can obtain information on a family’s financial services and how those services will help the clients comply with a piece of the Child Welfare case plan. For example, if a mother is required to obtain stable housing for her children, assistance provided by Welfare to Work may help this mother with finding a job to help her pay for housing and other necessities for her children.

Welfare to Work staff spend the time attending staffings and providing information, but questioned how much of the information exchanged benefits Welfare to Work workers. Five informants expressed the importance of seeing the benefits that they can expect to receive from their efforts at compliance with Linkages procedure, the idea of “what’s in it for me?” One informant described benefits as a carrot, compelling a worker to learn more about the program, to then gain more benefits from involvement. Another informant explained that it is this inability to see the benefits associated with Linkages that leads workers to be resistant. This informant went on to state that there continues to be a degree of resistance to Linkages in Madera County from people who do not believe that the benefits of the program are worth the effort required to produce those benefits.

This resistance seems to stem from a missing sense of unity, or team responsibility for the client, as opposed to responsibility for a task area. While one informant indicated a perception of shared success when unified efforts are made to help clients, another expressed a fear that taking the time to coordinate and
attend staffings is a waste of workers’ time. Other informants described perceptions of one-sidedness in the design of Linkages. Two informants mentioned difficulties in the staffing schedule that impact Welfare to Work staff, which would not likely affect the Child Welfare staff. Staffings are held at the Child Welfare building. If the staffing time gets moved, Welfare to Work staff are not usually notified of the time change and can end up waiting for up to an hour for their staffing to begin if the staffing starts later than scheduled, or they can show up too late if the staffing started earlier. Situations like this can convey a sense of unspoken bias, which can prevent staff from developing a collective identity, or making a unified effort to achieve a goal. Joint division training that highlights the benefits to both task areas and emphasizes the commonalities in program goals may address this issue. While some informants from Welfare to Work indicated that benefits to their division were uncertain, informants from Child Welfare commonly commented on the importance and value of contributions made by Welfare to Work staff to the work done by Child Welfare.

Tracking cases to identify those clients who managed to complete their assigned case plan activities and accomplish their goals was an issue discussed in three of the interviews. These staff felt that in order to show workers the potential fruits of their labor, attention must be paid to active Linkages cases to identify those successes that do occur. Sharing these success stories with staff would encourage them to put forth the effort to follow Linkages procedures. One informant explained that the Linkages program is still too new in Madera County to show local success cases, but that successes from other counties have been detailed in the Linkages trainings provided to staff.

Among the perceived benefits offered to the agency is a reduction in spending due to duplicated services being provided by Child Welfare and Welfare
to Work. At this time, no formal tracking has been done at the county level regarding the fiscal impact of service duplication. Interestingly, employees other than line staff most commonly mentioned this benefit. Line staff did not mention the cost to the county that results from duplication. Instead, these informants focused more on benefits to the county at the micro and mezzo level, discussing information sharing as paramount. Most of the respondents who were not line-staff expressed an understanding of the benefits both to workers and to the agency. Raising line-staff’s awareness of the macro level issues addressed by the Linkages Program may also be accomplished through training.

Number of Referrals and Cases

One issue that was consistently addressed by most informants was the number of cases and referrals that are determined to be Linkages-eligible. After reviewing a newly developed tracking document, one informant stated that though there are a large number of Linkages-eligible referrals, there are currently only seven Linkages-eligible cases in Madera County. Several informants described the process through which referrals that come in to the Child Welfare system and are screened for Linkages eligibility. Eight informants explained that despite the large number of Linkages-eligible referrals received, few of these referrals are ever promoted to a case. One informant explained that there are several reasons that this could happen. The referrals may be investigated and deemed to be unfounded or inconclusive, or that the families are not in need of Child Welfare services. Linkages-eligible referrals that result in the children being temporarily removed from the home may not go further in the process than the detention staffing where enough services and support are pulled together for the family that further interventions are not needed on the part of the county. It is possible that
the efforts at collaboration and following Linkages procedures during the investigation stage result in effective services and are to credit for the successful elimination of substantial threat to families. This elimination or mitigation of threat would then prevent a large number of referrals from promoting to cases.

Regardless of the reason for the limited number of Linkages cases, the result is that few ongoing workers ever get the opportunity to work with Linkages. Because there are so many Linkages-eligible referrals, however, many of the Emergency Response workers in Child Welfare have had the experience of coordinating with Welfare to Work staff to share information for the purpose of better assessing a family during the investigation stage. These collaboration-derived assessments can lead to sufficient preventative efforts to keep a family from entering the system altogether. According to one informant, the cost of putting forth the effort to coordinate on referrals is less than the cost to place a child in care.

One of the issues that comes up when staff do not have regular exposure to new procedures, as is the case with staff handling Linkages cases and using Linkages procedures, is maintaining an understanding of the program and how to use it. Many of the staff interviewed in this study discussed having attended training on Linkages procedures once or twice a year for the last 1 to 2 years. These staff also explained that due to the small number of eligible cases, they very seldom get to put to use the knowledge they have; and, when they finally do get a Linkages case, they no longer remember how to follow the necessary protocol. In these interviews, training was the most consistently identified challenge to implementation. One informant made the comment that if an idea is out of sight, it is out of mind. Another informant related this situation with training to theories on adult learning, stating that people need to hear a new concept several times
before it resonates. In one interview, the informant acknowledged the fact that workers will need to use the procedures more so that the steps become natural for them. More frequent training, or periodic refresher courses are suggestions that were given with some consistency among informants.

Areas of Implementation Going Well

In every interview, informants were able to mention a number of areas of implementation that were going well. Intake is one of the topics identified by six informants as being successful. Two informants credited this success to the involvement of clerical staff who help with screening new referrals for Linkages eligibility. One informant went on to comment that the clerical staff are very much relied upon for this task. Currently, with the screening process occurring with every new referral received by Child Welfare, and a new tracking document showing the referrals that are promoted to cases, the Linkages intake procedures have been implemented and are ensuring that no Linkages-eligible referrals or cases enter the system unnoticed.

Another implementation area that was discussed unanimously as being helpful is the increase in communication between divisions. As mentioned previously, information sharing between Child Welfare and Welfare to Work staff has helped workers from both task areas to have a more holistic impression of their clients’ lives and all the factors that affect their ability to be self-sufficient.

A unified approach to services was discussed in four interviews. These informants felt that their interactions with other staff, the coordination of services entailed in Linkages required them to become part of a team effort. Working together and exchanging information to get the most accurate details assessment of a client was described as a positive experience that resulted in improved outcomes.
Four informants stated that beginning training on Linkages was positive, though still others discussed training as an area requiring growth, which will be discussed later. These staff recalled attending trainings given by fellow staff members. Another informant explained that UC Davis offered a Linkages training in Madera County. Informants expressed that the information they received from trainings opened their minds to the possibilities of collaboration with other divisions. Many staff members had not realized what information they could share as a result of laws on confidentiality. However, training provided clarity on this issue. Confidentiality is still observed through Linkages, but a release of information is used to permit ongoing communication between service divisions and other agencies regarding each case.

Three informants discussed the level of administrative and supervisor support. One informant described Madera County Department of Social Services staff as being highly supportive of the Linkages program, of information sharing and of working together. Two others commented on the support given to staff by supervisors. All three of these informants conveyed that without this support, Linkages would not be able to thrive.

Three informants discussed a very important aspect of the Linkages Program. These three mentioned that the coordination of Linkages fosters a better understanding of and greater appreciation for the work done by other divisions. Often, workers in one task area are so consumed by their part of a process that they are unaware of the work done by others. The communication and coordination in tasks due to Linkages has increased staff’s awareness of the work done by others in different task areas. This coordination can illuminate the commonalities between divisions regarding goals and objectives and can increase feelings of group cohesion among those divisions.
Implementation Challenges

One of the most prevalent implementation challenges discussed in interviews was the need for additional training. The reasons behind this perception varied somewhat among the six informants who addressed this issue; however, there were also several common responses given. Clarity in procedure was an area identified by four informants as being a training need that impairs Linkages implementation. These staff commented that because procedures do not seem to be very well formalized that it is not always clear what actions to take in some situations.

Three informants specifically addressed having questions regarding how to work with ongoing cases. Another informant indicated that because there are several referrals but very few Linkages cases that periodic refresher training might be helpful to assist staff in maintaining an understanding of how to use Linkages. As is intended in the initial stages of Child Welfare involvement, referrals are investigated with the intention of determining if families are in need of intervention and, if families are given financial, mental health, or other support services, will the addition of those services adequately mitigate the conditions that created the safety risk and necessitated the Child Welfare referral. As referrals are screened out on these bases, few referrals become cases. However, the Linkages Program process begins with coordination at the investigation stage involving both divisions working together to exchange information, assess the client’s situation, and identify any services, from Welfare to Work or from Child Welfare, that the client may need in order to be healthy and to work toward self-sufficiency. Currently, all Child Welfare Emergency Response workers are exposed on a regular basis to Linkages referrals and are familiar with how to follow the proper channels to coordinate as needed with Welfare to Work and Eligibility staff.
Those Welfare to Work and Eligibility staff who are involved with the corresponding cases then also have experience with the intake process. Again, because so few referrals become cases, neither division has much experience dealing with ongoing Linkages procedure. Additional training to provide some clarification on procedure was suggested by these informants. Also, due to turnover, new staff need to be trained on Linkages procedures. Ongoing periodic training, or adding Linkages procedures to new worker training, were suggestions made by some informants.

Another perceived need for additional training was to help staff see the possible benefits of the program. Six informants explained that with this understanding, staff might be more motivated to be involved. Four respondents addressed the concepts of compassion and sensitivity, indicating that training staff on sensitivity might also affect worker’s motivation to participate by giving them a deeper understanding of the positive impact Linkages can have on families. This understanding and reinforced compassion and sensitivity might also encourage workers to put forth the extra effort and participate despite already heavy workloads. Six informants described workers already being overwhelmed by high caseloads as an obstacle to implementation. When workers struggle to complete the tasks they already have, adding additional tasks to their stack can elicit panic and resistance. Workers need to be shown that the benefits can outweigh the sacrifices made. One informant stated that Linkages can actually save time in the long run for workers because two people are working together on the same case, pushing to help clients complete the same tasks. So, while it may take more time initially, eventually, workers may experience more benefits than losses. Including these concepts in training could further ease resistance from staff.
Three informants indicated that additional training on the importance of identifying links from the back end is necessary to ensure that no Linkages eligible family falls through the cracks. One informant stated that new Welfare to Work referrals are supposed to be screened for Child Welfare connections, but it is uncertain if this procedure is being adhered to at this time.

Tracking cases and referrals was a common concern for four informants. These informants acknowledged the importance of maintaining a tracking procedure to follow referrals to cases and cases to discharge. As mentioned previously, tracking allows for successes and failures to be identified helping with the learning process and the perfection of the program.

Joint case planning and joint home visits were two areas that informants commonly addressed as areas for future growth. Five informants discussed feeling as though not enough effort is made to conduct joint case planning. While staffings are held to exchange information, joint case planning does not seem to occur. One option mentioned by three informants was to conduct joint home visits to meet with the family and have all key players involved in designing a coordinated case plan. The difficulty in implementing this option is that of coordinating the schedules of Child Welfare workers, Welfare to Work workers, and clients for a home visit. However, regardless of whether or not a joint home visit can be scheduled, coordinated case planning can still occur through other means.

Summary

For this study, nine staff members from the Madera County Department of Social Services/Child Welfare and Welfare to Work divisions were interviewed on their perceptions of the Linkages Program and its implementation. Each informant
contributed a slightly different understanding of Linkages, giving a generally positive perception of the program and its goals, and gave conceivable remedies to perceived challenges in Linkages procedure and/or implementation. Chapter 5 will cover the conclusions and recommendations from this study.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter addresses rigor and contains the conclusions and recommendations that resulted from this study. Further discussion regarding the major findings and themes is presented including implications for social work practice and areas of this topic needing additional research.

Rigor of the Study

To ensure this study’s rigor, this researcher identified potential threats to trustworthiness including inhibited responses, reactivity, and bias prior to conducting interviews. To encourage free expression, informants were interviewed in private and were informed of the measures that would be taken to ensure their confidentiality regarding any statements made during their interview, such as destruction of written notes and erasing audio recordings after the research was concluded. To protect against reactivity, structured interview questions were designed to be unassuming. Questions were administered with neutrality by this researcher to avoid responses based on informants’ perceptions of what may be socially desirable. This researcher used prolonged engagement as a tool to further reduce the chances of reactivity and informant bias. While the interviews were semistructured, the interviews took on a relaxed discussion format, allowing each informant to spend as much time as was needed to elaborate on their ideas and fully respond to each question. After interviewing, each member was given the opportunity to member check his or her written transcripts to ensure their responses accurately conveyed their ideas.
Major Findings of This Study

The data from this study revealed several key findings. Statements made by informants suggest that a need for ongoing training, already heavy workloads, and the need for worker buy-in are the existing challenges to the effective implementation of the Linkages Program. All informants were able to describe two of the purposes of the Linkages Program, though few informants connected the mission of Linkages with that of Madera County Department of Social Services. In giving a description of the program’s purposes, some informants focused more on the micro level components and other informants were aware of both micro and macro program components. The results of this study also indicated that the overall sense of group cohesiveness, or group identity, among Child Welfare Services workers and Welfare to Work staff is limited. Also, because not all workers in Child Welfare Services and Welfare to Work have worked with Linkages-eligible cases and referrals, staff’s overall attitude toward the program may reflect this lack of exposure. Lastly, informants were able to give several suggestions for areas for future growth. These included reconsidering the Linkages staffing schedule, provide ongoing joint division training, begin joint home visits between Welfare to Work staff and Child Welfare staff, and move toward conducting joint case plans.

Many of the findings from this study were consistent with prior literature. First, as discussed by Cameron (2005), feelings of unity may be enhanced through common knowledge and understanding. By cross training on task area goals and procedures, workers can develop an understanding of and appreciation for the work done by other divisions and can develop a sense of group cohesiveness based on identified similarities. Second, most informants seemed to be unfamiliar with the relationship between the mission of Linkages and the mission of the Madera
County Department of Social Services. As postulated by Holloway and Brager (1989), understanding problem solutions, like Linkages, to the agency’s overall focus can ease resistance among staff. Currently, as addressed by some informants, those who do not see the benefits of Linkages, either because of lack of exposure or because of a disagreement with its general goals and objectives, and cannot relate the program to the mission of the department are more likely to resist the changes made to follow Linkages procedure. As addressed by Hamilton (2007), a group brought together by similarities in agency or function can enact goal-directed behavior. Also, the comments made by the various informants regarding seemingly more complete understandings of specific task area goals and how these compliment the goals of Linkages may suggest that workers identify more closely with their task areas than their department. Assuming that individuals can be unified by common knowledge, the knowledge of a common task area being foremost to workers would give some indication of how they identify and with what group they feel cohesion. A mission statement can be used to unify individuals in an agency under a common function and goals, just as policy and procedure guidelines of a particular task area can unify staff of that unit or division.

Third, to confirm the statements made by Holloway and Brager (1989), the role of supervisors and other superiors is key in successful implementation of a new program. As mentioned by informants, supervisors have the ability to talk up changes and make them a central focus of their units. Supervisors must relate the changes in procedure to the overall mission of the agency.
**Implications for Social Work Practice**

Among the most important lessons to be learned from this study is the importance of group identity and of activities that build a sense of group cohesiveness. Addressed in many interviews with informants was the idea of having joint division trainings and other activities requiring staff from different divisions to interact and obtain a better understanding of the work done by other divisions.

Another key point addressed by informants was the detrimental effects of having specialized caseloads. In the past, Madera County Department of Social Services has assigned specific types of cases to one worker and when that worker left the agency, no one else was trained to take over that caseload. This left the agency in a tough situation trying to cover the work load until someone else could be trained to carry the specialized cases. The department is now trying to avoid creating another specialized position for a Linkages caseload and is trying to train all the members of the affected divisions to be able to handle a Linkages case. Unfortunately, because there are so few Linkages cases, everyone is trained to carry a Linkages case, but not everyone has had experience with practicing Linkages procedures. Offering refresher training is important in ensuring staff recall how to handle a Linkages case when one arrives on their desk.

**Implications for Needed Changes in Policy**

One of the most important suggestions made by informants was the need for additional training. Informants suggested having Linkages addressed quarterly in division meetings, and also periodically in joint division meetings. Also, including information at new worker training can provide a foundation level understanding for new staff.
Another area that requires attention, as discussed by informants, is the staffing schedule. The current procedures have Linkages staffings held at the Child Welfare building during certain hours on one day each month. However, when these staffings do not begin when initially scheduled, Welfare to Work and Eligibility staff do not always receive proper advanced warning. One suggestion regarding scheduling was to have staffings scheduled with breaks in between so if staffings run over, there will be a cushion to keep them from running into other staffing times. Also, it was recommended that staffings do not begin until the time they are scheduled, unless all parties are contacted and can arrange to be there early or can provide their information over the phone or by another means.

Lastly, a change in policy to reflect coordination with other service divisions to conduct joint home visits is needed. If joint home visits are not possible due to either worker’s schedule, then making sure contact is made to exchange vital information before a solo home visit is made should also be added into the policy as a contingency plan.

Limitations of This Research

Because a variation of purposive sampling was used in this study, generalizability of the results is circumscribed. While the research sample was intended to provide equal representation among all promotion levels and across both divisions, the ideas and beliefs of those informants interviewed do not necessarily represent those of their respective divisions.

This study did not address the variation in experience with Linkages and assumed each of its respondents had enough experience to comment on each of the research questions. However, not all workers in either division have had any
experience with Linkages; others have had privileged exposure to Linkages conferences and trainings.

Another possible limitation to this study is that a second member checking process was not conducted allowing informants to review the coded data from their interviews. Due to this limitation, concepts taken from informants’ responses are presented based on this researcher’s interpretation.

Also, being that informants were chosen by their superiors, it is possible that their selection in interview candidates served a more political purpose. There was no way to screen for this prior to interviewing.

**Future Research**

Due to the importance of group identity, efforts should be made to employ interventions to increase interdivision unity and research instruments should be used before and after these interventions to evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions.

Because Madera County Department of Social Services has just recently begun using a tracking document to collect data on its Linkages Program, future research might analyze these data to evaluate the program’s impact on client success. Some outcomes that should be watched include the number of Linkages-eligible referrals that are received in comparison to the number of referrals that are promoted to cases; the number of referrals that are not promoted to cases due to the identification of additional support services to mitigate the safety concerns as a result of interdivision collaboration; the number of Linkages families in Family Reunification Services through Child Welfare who successfully reunify with their children and maintain reunification, in comparison to families who were not Linkages-eligible; the number of Linkages families in Family Maintenance
Services that avoided having their children removed, in comparison to families who were not Linkages eligible; the number of Child Welfare referrals made by Welfare to Work staff who are trained on reportable incidents and the indicators of child abuse; and the number of referrals Child Welfare staff are able to make to Welfare to Work for families who had been referred to Child Welfare Services after they recognized the families’ eligibility.

Another area for future research would be to look more deeply into the effectiveness of cross training given to both divisions as it applies to their ability to recognize the need to cross-refer. To what extent are Child Welfare staff familiar with Welfare to Work eligibility? Are they able to determine during a home visit if the family under investigation for child abuse or neglect is likely eligible for Welfare to Work services? Also, to what extent are Welfare to Work staff familiar with reportable incidents and the indicators of child abuse.

Additional examination of all employees’ knowledge of Linkages after training might also be useful. Initial efforts by the agency to test for staff’s understanding and perceptions of trainings given were unsuccessful because few workers responded. Providing a survey or other instrument during a division meeting might be a more successful means of obtaining worker feedback.

One point of interest for future research is the reason behind so few Linkages referrals becoming cases. Aside from the standard elimination of unfounded and inconclusive Child Welfare referrals, research may shine a light on other factors that impact the number of Linkages-eligible cases. This research might entail a review of existing eligibility criteria, looking at inclusion/exclusion determinants; evaluating the screening process to determine the reliability of its results; or a comparison data analysis to determine if the number of Linkages
eligible referrals that do not promote to cases is disproportionately lower than the number of non-Linkages-eligible referrals that do not promote.

This Study’s Contribution to the Larger Knowledge Base

As intended, this study provided knowledge specific to the Linkages Program of Madera County Department of Social Services. This study did, however, make a contribution to the larger knowledge base. It addressed the effects of feelings of internal agency bias on group cohesiveness. Regardless of the efforts made to cross train and foster a sense of group identity among staff, if the very program design and policies communicate a sort of bias, group cohesiveness cannot be achieved. For staff in the Madera County Department of Social Services/Child Welfare and Welfare to Work divisions group cohesiveness, and resultantly collective action, may be hindered by policy and procedure guidelines that appear to provide greater consideration to one division over the other.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

APPROVAL FROM MADERA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Date: March 27, 2009
To: Amber Davis, MSW Candidate
From: Kelly Woodard, MSW
Deputy Director
Subject: Permission to Conduct Worksite Surveys with Madera County Social Work/Employment Training Services Staff (Linkages)

The purpose of this memo to convey the support and approval of your securing information, through a Survey format of our Social Work and Employment and Training Worker Staff. As requested, you have worked alongside our agency managers in both Child Welfare and Welfare to Work programs to ensure the survey content reflected information that once gathered and compiled has the potential of informing Madera County on practice based issues tied to the Linkages program.

As we previously discussed, permission was granted to conduct your agency data collection. We look forward to your return to Madera County, and hearing what was learned through your Linkages research project.
APPENDIX B
HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL
COMMITTEE ON THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS  
DEPARTMENT (UNIT) REVIEW FORM  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO

**Please type**  
**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**  Dr. Jane Yamaguchi  
**Name**  
**DSWE**  
**Dept. (unit)**  
**PH102**  
**Mail Stop Number**  
**278-7315**  
**Dept. Telephone Number**  
**278-3992**  
**Telephone Number**  

**If student or collaborative research:**  Amber Davis  
**Name**  
**MSW Student**  
**Affiliation**  
**269-1270**  
**Telephone Number**  

**TITLE OF STUDY**  Exploring the Linkages Program in Madera County  

**If funding is sought, from what agency?**  None is sought  

**How did the Principal Investigator designate the research?**  Minimal Risk  

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<th>REVIEWER 1</th>
<th>REVIEWER 2</th>
<th>REVIEWER 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Name**  Donna Hardina  | **Name**  Martha Vungkhanching  | **Name**  
| **At risk**  | **At risk**  | **At risk**  |
| Minimal risk  | Minimal risk  | Minimal risk  |
| COMMENTS:  | COMMENTS:  | COMMENTS:  |
|  |  |  |

The department may wish to route this form to the 3 reviewers or send each reviewer a form. If the review is done on three separate forms, the Chair ought to give each reviewer the comments of the other reviewers as well as the Principal Investigator. If all three reviewers judge the proposal as "minimal risk," the Department Chair notifies the Principal Investigator and keeps this form(s) for 5 years.
Interview Questions

1. How long have you worked for Madera County Dept. of Social Services?

2. How would you describe the Linkages Program?

3. Please describe challenges or issues raised when a family experienced both child abuse and poverty.

4. How do you perceive the need for coordinated services between public assistance and child welfare services?

5. To what extent do you feel Child Welfare coordinates client services with Welfare to Work for Linkages eligible cases?

6. What is your perception of the progress in implementing Linkages in Madera County?

7. What directions would you like to see Linkages in Madera County go?

8. What further areas of Linkages could be changed to better meet the needs of clients?
California State University, Fresno

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Amber J. Davis
Print full name as it appears on submission

Authorized signature of author/owner

4/16/09
Date