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### Title

Implementation of California's Cal-Learn Demonstration Project, A Process Evaluation:  
Program Operation From July 1996 Through December 1997

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**IMPLEMENTATION OF CALIFORNIA'S  
CAL-LEARN DEMONSTRATION PROJECT  
A PROCESS EVALUATION**

**Program Operation from July 1996 - December 1997**

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*Points of view or opinions expressed in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Regents of the University of California or the California Department of Social Services.*

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Adequate Progress	Earning a “D” (1.0) grade point average on a progress report/report card
AFDC	Aid to Families with Dependent Children
AFLP	Adolescent Family Life Program—Cal-Learn case management model
Ancillary Expenses	Expenses related to school attendance and/or graduation; includes books, GED testing fees, caps and gowns, etc.
AU	Assistance Unit—Includes all persons on an AFDC case for whom cash assistance is received
BAP	Bureau of Assistance Payments—Los Angeles County AFDC
Bonus	Payment of money to the AU when a teen parent makes satisfactory progress (2.0 GPA or higher) in the teen’s educational program
CalWORKs	California Work Opportunity and Responsibility for Kids—The state’s 1997 welfare reform program
CDE	California Department of Education
CDHS	California Department of Health Services
CDS	Case Data System—Alameda County AFDC Data System
CDSS	California Department of Social Services
CHSPE	California High School Proficiency Exam
Client	Cal-Learn program participant
CWD	County Welfare Department
CWDA	County Welfare Director’s Association
CWPDP	California Work Pays Demonstration Project
Deferred	Status of teen parent who is not required to participate in the Cal-Learn program in accordance with deferral criteria. A deferred teen parent receives case management services but is not subject to sanctions, eligible for bonuses or supportive services.
DHS	Department of Health Services (see CDHS)
DPSS	Department of Public Social Services—Los Angeles County
EW	Eligibility Worker—AFDC
Exempt	Status of teen parent who is not required to participate in accordance with the Cal-Learn exemption criteria. An exempt individual receives no services and is not subject to sanctions or eligible for bonuses.
GAIN	Greater Avenues for Independence (California’s JOBS program)
GEARS	GAIN Employment Activity and Reporting System - Los Angeles County administrative data system
GED	General Educational Development examination (High School Equivalency Degree)
GEMS/CLAS	GAIN Employment Management System/Cal-Learn Administrative System GAIN administrative data systems in San Bernardino and San Joaquin Counties
GIS	GAIN Information System—GAIN administrative data system in Alameda County
GPA	Grade point average

IBPS	Integrated Benefit Payment System—Los Angeles County AFDC administrative data system
LEADER	Los Angeles Eligibility, Automation, Determination, Evaluation and Reporting System—welfare eligibility system under development to replace IBPS and related systems in Los Angeles County
Lodestar	Database developed to collect data from AFLP agencies for CDHS, later modified to accommodate Cal-Learn and CDSS needs
MAP	Maximum Aid Payment—refers to the AFDC grant amount
MCH	Maternal and Child Health Branch, California Department of Health Services—the division of CDHS that oversees the AFLP program
MIS	Management Information System
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
Nested case	Teen parent who is on his or her parent’s AFDC case
Non-nested (unnested)	Teen parent who has established his or her own AFDC case (although the teen may still live with a parent or other adult)
Participant	Participant in the Cal-Learn program
Payee	Person to whom AFDC check is made out
PMP	Pregnant Minor Program
PRWORA	Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. Federal welfare reform legislation which eliminated the AFDC and JOBS (GAIN in California) programs and replaced them with TANF block grants
Sanction	Reduction in cash aid payment for the AU based on the Cal-Learn requirement for students earning worse than a “D” (1.0) average in school, those not attending school at all, or those who fail to turn in a report card
Satisfactory Progress	Earning at least a “C” (2.0) grade point average on a progress report/report card
SAPID	School Age Parenting and Infant Development Program—CDE-funded child care program
SAWS	Statewide Automated Welfare System—San Joaquin County AFDC administrative data system
SRC	Survey Research Center, University of California, Berkeley
Supportive Services	Transportation, child care and ancillary expenses needed by teen parents to attend their educational program
SSA	Social Service Agency—Alameda County Welfare Department
TANF	Temporary Assistance to Needy Families—1996 Federal welfare reform program, enacted under PRWORA to replace AFDC and JOBS
UC DATA	University of California Data Archive & Technical Assistance, University of California, Berkeley

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cal-Learn is an innovative program designed to help pregnant and parenting teenagers on welfare overcome the barriers to receiving a high school diploma. The program features intensive case management; funding for child care, transportation and other ancillary expenses needed to attend school; and bonuses and sanctions to induce teen parents to attend school, do well and graduate from high school. The program is now in its fourth year of operation in California. This is the second and final Cal-Learn process evaluation report. The first report covered the initial planning and implementation of the program, providing a chronological account of the program's implementation in the four demonstration counties and at the state level from June 1993 through June 1996. This report covers the period between July 1996 and December 1997, and it provides an analysis of the operational challenges, including coordination of Cal-Learn with the schools.

Our analysis draws on information obtained from 254 face-to-face interviews conducted with state and county agency staff between 1994 and 1997. Many of those interviewed for this report have worked diligently on Cal-Learn and on the operational challenges presented here since the inception of the program. The significant challenges that the health and welfare agencies faced in the implementation of the Cal-Learn program were delineated in the first process evaluation report. Upon re-visiting the agencies in 1997, however, we found that many of these same operational challenges persisted despite three years of program experience.

### **Interagency Coordination**

In California, welfare programs are administered at the county-level. While state-level health, education and welfare agencies work together to establish Cal-Learn program regulations and guidelines, local welfare departments and AFLP agencies carry the operational responsibilities for the program.

Cal-Learn is a complicated program for counties to operate. AFDC, GAIN, AFLP case management agencies, and schools each have separate yet interconnected functions in the operation of the program. Creating the interagency linkages and internal agency capacities for operating the program was difficult. The procedures for sharing information between agencies were hampered by multiple and incompatible computer information systems. Each agency's data system is unique. System use is generally restricted to internal staff for practical reasons as well as to protect the clients' confidentiality. Since the first report, we found that coordination issues had improved modestly between AFLPs and the schools, and had stabilized between GAIN and AFLP. Improvements in communications between AFDC and GAIN, and in the process of referring clients from AFDC to Cal-Learn have been slowed by systemic changes within AFDC which have diverted staff attention from the Cal-Learn program.

### **Client Identification and Declining Caseload Issues**

Since the start of the program, identifying all of the Cal-Learn eligible teens has proved to be one of Cal-Learn's most significant and enduring problems. Since peaking in the Spring of 1996, the statewide Cal-Learn caseload has been declining steadily. This has created difficulties for AFLP agencies who, having geared up for dramatic caseload increases just two years earlier, were unexpectedly facing downsizing issues in 1997. External factors contributing to the decline in

the Cal-Learn caseload include the declining teen birth rate and a substantial drop in AFDC caseloads. These declines, however, do not fully account for the drop in the Cal-Learn caseload. Obstacles internal to the operation of the program include: a lack of referral codes in the welfare administrative databases; insufficient knowledge among AFDC staff about Cal-Learn; special problems finding nested teens; and maintaining teen enrollment in the program after they open their own case or otherwise cycle off and on aid. Welfare reform and systemic changes in AFDC have compounded the difficulties of finding and referring Cal-Learn eligible teens. To

AFLP agencies have expanded their outreach activities, and some GAIN programs have undertaken additional procedures to try to find Cal-Learn eligible cases.

### **Bonuses and Sanctions**

Cal-Learn employs financial incentives to motivate teens to complete high school. There is evidence from case manager interviews and the telephone survey of teens that clients are confused about whether they are subject to Cal-Learn sanctions. Confusion is understandable given the unavoidable delays in deducting sanctions, and the fact that sanctions are incorporated into basic grant calculations which have twice undergone changes during this report period. Generally, there is no confusion about Cal-Learn bonuses as these are issued as separate checks soon after the client turns in a report card.

Defining the due date for report cards and interpreting school performance for bonus and sanction purposes proved to be difficult because Cal-Learn teens attend a wide variety of programs with an equally vast assortment of marking periods and evaluation systems. Students enrolled in non-traditional programs in all counties sometimes receive credits for work completed rather than letter grades. The AFLP agencies developed simplified report card forms for use in school programs that did not issue traditional report cards. These forms continued to be used and introduced in new school programs throughout the course of this reporting period.

### **Supportive Services**

The Cal-Learn program offers financial support for child care, transportation, and ancillary expenses related to school attendance. CDSS data indicates that only about 9% of Cal-Learn teens statewide utilize child care funding.<sup>1</sup> There are many reasons for this, including teens' preference for having family or friends take care of their children, the availability of on-site care in some schools, a shortage of infant care slots in some communities, and frustration with the bureaucratic process for receiving the funds. More teens, about 17% statewide, accessed Cal-Learn transportation funding. Bus passes and single ride bus tickets account for the majority of expenditures of transportation funds. Few Cal-Learn teens (1-3%) took advantage of funding to pay for ancillary expenses such as books and supplies, and testing fees for GED exams.

### **Case Management**

Within the AFLP case management model there are a wide range of service delivery styles, and case managers perform a vast array of activities. What holds the model together is the shared emphasis on the overall health and well-being of teen parents, the standard caseload limit of forty clients per case manager, and the mandated use of the Lodestar forms, which serve to focus and orient the case management process toward common Cal-Learn/AFLP goals. Maintaining the integrity of the AFLP case management model in the face of the changes prescribed by Cal-Learn

was a challenge for most agencies. Expansion issues, the program's new affiliation with county welfare departments, and a significant number of time-consuming tasks required of case managers put a strain on the traditional AFLP model because these additional activities left case managers with less time to focus on psychosocial, health and infant care issues. In addition, the training and education level of case managers changed in many agencies from nurses and MSW level social workers to BA-level case managers.

Of the four research counties, the AFLP agencies in San Bernardino and San Joaquin were operated by county health departments, and their case managers put relatively greater emphasis on health care issues than did the case managers in the other two counties. The AFLP agencies in Los Angeles and Alameda counties are operated by private non-profit agencies. There, the case managers tend to hold degrees in psychology or social work, and to be relatively younger and less experienced. The case managers in these two counties are more likely to have come from backgrounds similar to their clients', and they tend to be ethnically matched to their clients.

School programs for pregnant and parenting teens sometimes provide case management, or similar kinds of services to students. For example, some school-based health clinics, such as those funded through the Healthy Start program, provide comprehensive services, including case management similar to that available through Cal-Learn. However, these programs are rare and generally available only to teens who attend school. Teens who have dropped out are believed to have far less access to case management services.

### **Schools**

Cal-Learn encourages teen parents to complete high school assuming that a high school diploma will allow them to compete in the job market and avoid welfare dependency as adults. There is concern, however, that many Cal-Learn teens are not being adequately prepared for either continuing education or the workplace. Upon visiting the schools that some Cal-Learn teens attend, we found that schools struggle to serve the often complex educational and psychosocial needs of Cal-Learn students. Consistent with national data and the literature on teen parents, Cal-Learn case managers and school staff reported to us that many of the teens in the program were school dropouts before they became pregnant, and many have very low academic skills. Moreover, teens often have to choose between comprehensive schools and alternative programs which offer more in the way of flexibility and supportive services, but which are generally considered academically less rigorous.

Relationships between the schools and the Cal-Learn program vary considerably from school to school, and even among staff within the same school. Some of the alternative school programs reported good relationships with Cal-Learn case managers, utilizing their services to facilitate student support groups and using them to help keep at-risk students in school. For the most part, however, schools are unaware of Cal-Learn and do not know which of their students are in the program. Even among the alternative school programs, where pregnant and parenting students tend to congregate, Cal-Learn teens constitute a minority of students. Teachers are apt to find out a student's Cal-Learn status only when a Cal-Learn student tells the teacher, or asks that teachers fill out special attendance, enrollment or report card forms.



## I. INTRODUCTION

### **The Cal-Learn Program**

In recent years, welfare reform has come to the forefront of policy issues nationwide. In 1996, President Clinton signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), the most significant piece of welfare reform legislation since the enactment of Social Security in 1935. Under the new law, the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program (AFDC) was replaced by Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). TANF recipients face stringent work requirements and limits on the length of time they may receive aid. Prominent in the focus on welfare reform has been concern about teenage pregnancy. PRWORA requires that unmarried teen parents (under 18) participate in educational activities as a condition of welfare receipt.<sup>2</sup> Even before federal law required it, however, California had implemented its own education-oriented program for pregnant and parenting teens on welfare, known as Cal-Learn.

The Cal-Learn program was authorized by the California legislature in 1993 (Senate Bills 35 and 1078). Implementation of the program required federal waivers, which were granted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on March 1, 1994 as part of a package of welfare reform waivers included in the California Work Pays Demonstration Project (CWDPDP). Cal-Learn has been continued under California's new TANF plan, CalWORKs, which passed in the California legislature in August 1997 and became effective in January 1998.<sup>3</sup> Cal-Learn is a mandatory program for pregnant or parenting teens on welfare who have not obtained a high school degree or its equivalent. The goal of the program is to help these teens overcome the barriers to completing their secondary level education by providing them with a combination of intensive case management, supportive services, and financial inducements (see Appendix A). Over one-half of the women on welfare in California had their first child as a teenager<sup>4</sup> (see Appendix B for facts on teenage childbearing). Teens in the Cal-Learn program who obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent are projected to have lower rates of long-term dependence on welfare, and may help break this cycle.

Under the Cal-Learn program, pregnant and parenting teens receive a \$100 bonus up to four times a year for maintaining satisfactory progress in school (at least a "C" grade point average) and a one-time \$500 bonus for high school graduation or its equivalent. They can also receive a sanction of \$100 up to four times a year (\$50 for two consecutive months), if they fail to maintain at least a "D" grade point average in school or do not submit a report card (this includes teens not enrolled in school). Intensive case management is offered to each teen, as is financial support for child care, transportation, and school-related expenses. Eligible teens must participate in Cal-Learn until they earn a high school diploma or its equivalent, or until they turn 19. The CalWORKs plan (effective January 1998) allows teens in the program to volunteer to participate in Cal-Learn until they turn 20.

In the S.B. 35 legislation, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) was identified as the lead agency for planning and implementing the Cal-Learn program. As lead agency, CDSS was responsible for submitting the federal waivers to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; compiling a comprehensive budget; developing technical and administrative regulations for the program; conducting an evaluation of the Cal-Learn program; and coordinating an overall

program design with the California Department of Health Services (CDHS), Department of Education (CDE), and the counties. It is important to note that California's welfare programs, while financed chiefly through the state, are actually administered at the county level under CDSS oversight. Thus, Cal-Learn is managed by county welfare departments (CWDs).

Within counties, GAIN was designated as the agency to operate the Cal-Learn program. AFDC was responsible for identifying eligible clients, referring them to GAIN, and deducting sanctions from their benefits (except in Alameda County). GAIN, in addition to administering the program, approves supportive services, authorizes bonuses and sanctions, issues bonus checks, and refers clients for case management services. Under CalWORKs, in 1998 GAIN and AFDC no longer exist, and their functions have been reassigned within revamped county welfare departments.

The legislation that created Cal-Learn required counties to contract for the program's case management services with Adolescent Family Life Program (AFLP) agencies, or ensure that the local agency providing these services meet the scope and standards of the AFLP case management model (see Appendix C).<sup>5</sup> The AFLP program has been in existence since 1985, and it is the California Department of Health Services' primary intervention program for pregnant and parenting teens. The central focus of this voluntary program is to improve the health of teen parents and their children through the provision of comprehensive case management. The AFLP program takes a broad view of health and offers counseling and referrals to needed services to enhance the psychosocial, physical, economic and educational well-being of teen parents and their children. The Cal-Learn program modified the AFLP case management model by placing increased emphasis on the case managers' role in monitoring teens' school attendance and graduation, and by making case managers responsible for recommending financial bonuses and sanctions.<sup>6</sup> The implications of these changes are discussed later in this report in the section on case management.

### **The Cal-Learn Evaluation**

The terms and conditions of the CWPDP federal waiver required an evaluation of the impact of welfare reforms, including an evaluation of the Cal-Learn program. The 1997 CalWORKs legislation continued the Cal-Learn evaluation along with the program. The four counties selected for the Cal-Learn evaluation—San Bernardino, Alameda, San Joaquin, and Los Angeles—had been designated as “research” counties under an earlier waiver agreement with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and California decided to continue with these same counties under the 1994 CWPDP waiver (For a description of the counties, see Appendix D). CDSS separated functions for the Cal-Learn evaluation between the University of California at Berkeley and the University of California at Los Angeles. UC Berkeley's Data Archive and Technical Assistance (UC DATA) center was chosen to collect the data for the outcome evaluation, and to conduct the implementation study. UCLA's School of Public Policy and Social Research was chosen to analyze and interpret the data for the outcome study.

*Research Design.* In collaboration with CDSS, UC DATA designed a research strategy for evaluating Cal-Learn and in 1994 began testing the randomization process, research design, and data collection in San Bernardino County. The evaluation employs a two-way factorial design to contrast the independent and combined effects of two program elements: (1) intensive case

management and (2) financial incentives and penalties. Teens who met the eligibility requirements on paper were randomly assigned to one of four research conditions: full Cal-Learn, i.e., case management with bonuses and sanctions; case management with no bonuses or sanctions; bonuses and sanctions without case management; and neither case management nor bonuses and sanctions. All teens in the evaluation were offered supportive services, including reimbursement for child care, transportation to school, and school-related expenses. Sampling of teen parents for the evaluation took place during three periods:

- the Test Cohort (November 1994--June 1995);
- the Early Cohort (July 1995--June 1996); and
- the Late Cohort (July 1996--June 1997).

**Figure 1**  
**Cal-Learn Factorial Research Design**

<b>Case Management Incentives/Sanctions</b> (Supportive Services)	<b>Case Management No Incentives/Sanctions</b> (Supportive Services)
<b>No Case Management Incentives/Sanctions</b> (Supportive Services)	<b>No Case Management No Incentives/Sanctions</b> (Supportive Services)

*Eligibility for Research Participation.* Data collection and research implementation procedures were issued by the CDSS in August 1995 to all four counties taking part in the Cal-Learn evaluation. As pregnant teens and custodial teen parents on AFDC were enrolled in Cal-Learn during any of the three sampling periods, or cohorts, they were randomly assigned to a research condition based on their Social Security number. The following conditions needed to be met by teens to be included in the randomization:

- the teen met Cal-Learn program eligibility requirements as defined in Cal-Learn regulations, Manual of Policies and Procedures, Section 42-763;
- the teen was 18  $\frac{1}{2}$  years or younger;
- the teen was not a member of a household participating in the CWPDP control or experimental research groups; and
- the teen was eligible for AFDC and new to the Cal-Learn program.

Exceptions to assignment by Social Security number were made when more than one teen in the same household was Cal-Learn eligible. In these cases, all teens in the same household were assigned the research code of the first teen randomized. Assignment of teens to research conditions in any period stopped when a county reached or exceeded its projected number of "research teens" for that cohort.

*Timing of randomization.* The randomization for the impact evaluation across all four research counties was set to begin in July 1995. Although the randomization continued in San Bernardino, it actually began in the other counties in August (Alameda), September (San Joaquin), and December 1995 (Los Angeles). The randomization process began when county

workers identified potential Cal-Learn eligibles at intake or from AFDC records and randomized them into the four cells of the research design *before* attempting to notify or enroll them into the program itself.

Although the Cal-Learn Program includes an orientation, attendance is not mandatory. Teens were randomized into treatment condition regardless of whether or not they attended the orientation. In other words, research clients were assigned randomly to condition before they were seen at orientation or contacted personally by mail or phone, by GAIN workers or AFLP case managers.

**Table 1**  
**Number Randomized by County<sup>7</sup>**

	<b>San Bernardino</b>	<b>Alameda</b>	<b>San Joaquin</b>	<b>Los Angeles</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>TEST COHORT</b>	490	n/a	n/a	n/a	490
<b>EARLY COHORT</b>	897	269	313	753	2232
<b>LATE COHORT</b>	1167	353	244	1007	2771

*Data Collection.* Sources of information about the Cal-Learn research teens are:

- a telephone survey of program participants (the Cal-Learn Retrospective Survey);
- the AFDC database for the county;
- the GAIN database for the county;
- the Lodestar database on case management;
- the Supportive Services database in San Bernardino and San Joaquin counties (In Los Angeles and Alameda counties supportive services are included in the GAIN database);
- birth records from CDHS;
- Medi-Cal Eligibility Data System assistance history; and
- Employment Development Department base wage data.

### **Overview of Report**

Under the Terms and Conditions of the Cal-Learn waiver (see Appendix E), UC DATA is responsible for documenting how the Cal-Learn program was implemented and how it is operating in the research counties. This is the second Cal-Learn process evaluation report. The first report covered the initial planning for the program, providing a chronological account of the program's implementation history at the state level and details about the four research counties through June 1996.<sup>8</sup> This report continues the discussion of the challenges identified in the earlier report and updates those findings for the period between July 1996 and December 1997. This report introduces the issues involved in coordinating with the schools and the special obstacles pregnant and parenting teens face in completing their high school education.

Cal-Learn is an ambitious and innovative program to help pregnant and parenting teens overcome the barriers to receiving a high school diploma. During the first year and a half, the program placed new and challenging demands on the agencies responsible for its implementation. The notable challenges included: coordination among AFDC, GAIN, and AFLP agencies; reorganization of agencies to accommodate larger caseloads; finding and enrolling clients; issuing bonuses and sanctions; maintaining the AFLP case management model within a new context; and supplying needed supportive services to Cal-Learn clients.

Information for this report was gathered primarily through face-to-face interviews with administrative personnel involved in the Cal-Learn program in the four research counties and in the state capital, Sacramento. UC DATA staff conducted 254 face-to-face interviews with key informants in the participating agencies throughout the planning and implementation of the program between 1994 and 1997. All interviews were semi-structured, voluntary and confidential. Throughout this report generalizations are based on comments made by the majority of respondents on a given topic. Where quotations have been used to help make a point, they are representative of the majority opinion unless otherwise noted.

Those interviewed at the state level included policy officials from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), the Maternal and Child Health branch of the California Department of Health Services (CDHS), and the California Department of Education (CDE). At the county level, interviewees included AFDC administrators and eligibility workers, GAIN supervisors and staff, and AFLP directors, case managers, and data entry clerks (see Appendix F). In addition, schools serving Cal-Learn teens were visited, and school district administrators, teachers, principals and other school staff were interviewed. To supplement these interviews, researchers reviewed agency memos and other documents relevant to the implementation and data collection efforts of the administering agencies. Finally, data from the Retrospective Survey, a confidential telephone survey of the teens in the evaluation, have been used to provide teens' reactions to the program.

## II. INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

Perhaps the most difficult challenges identified in the first process evaluation report were those associated with individual agency reorganization, developing new procedures to fulfill the Cal-Learn program requirements, and coordination among agencies. Agencies that had not worked together programmatically prior to Cal-Learn had to develop interagency linkages and timely procedures for communicating information about their clients in common. The sections below describe the status of interagency linkages at the state and county levels.

### **State Level Coordination**

As described in the first process evaluation, shortly after passage of the Cal-Learn legislation, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) created the Cal-Learn Policy Unit (3-5 staff) within its Employment Programs Bureau (GAIN), to help launch the program statewide. A stable core group of staff remained with the Cal-Learn Policy Unit from the start of the program in 1994 until the fall of 1997. Early on in the Cal-Learn planning process, this Policy Unit, created an interagency Cal-Learn “Work Group” to assist it in the development of program regulations and as a means to coordinate with other state level agencies.

Throughout the course of the meetings of the Work Group, CDSS staff became more familiar with the AFLP program and educational programs for pregnant and parenting teens. They also told us that they became more aware of the limited control that state level staff at CDHS and CDE have over the delivery of local health and education programs. The state health and education agencies rely mainly on establishing standards of practice, goals and guidelines within which community-based providers have considerable latitude in setting their own operational rules and quality criteria. In contrast, CDSS historically exercised fairly strong authority over county welfare programs, monitoring county compliance with detailed program rules and regulations. These differences in state-level authority made it clear that state control over Cal-Learn would be difficult to achieve even if Work Group members could agree on how the program should be operated.

County administration of the program, and the unique character of each counties’ participating agencies compounded the difficulties of statewide program coordination. The Work Group eventually realized that state health and education agencies do not have the authority to enforce or even make decisions about many of the more complex operations issues that fall under local control. For example, CDSS would have preferred that all AFLP case managers conduct home visits with their Cal-Learn clients. While case managers often meet with clients in their homes, AFLP Standards of Practice require a monthly client contact without specifying the location or nature of the contact (in person or over the telephone). CDSS staff were similarly frustrated when they became aware that CDE does not mandate uniform graduation standards across school districts, and that grading and course credit systems vary tremendously often within the same district. Despite its limitations as a decision-making group, the Work Group continued to meet quarterly through 1997 as the sole state-level interagency forum devoted to discussing Cal-Learn operation and policy issues.

In Fall 1997, the Cal-Learn Policy Unit was re-named the Teen Programs Unit in recognition of administrative and policy changes. Specifically, the unit was set to assume oversight of new teen

pregnancy prevention efforts throughout the state; and counties were to be allowed to propose alternatives to Cal-Learn through the CalWORKs' county demonstration project process. New staff were assigned to the Teen Programs Unit, while former Cal-Learn Policy Unit staff took on new positions throughout CDSS. The new Teen Programs Unit staff met with the Cal-Learn Work Group to help them assess the status of the program statewide, and to keep members abreast of changes in welfare regulations that impacted pregnant and parenting teens.

### **County Level Coordination**

In our first report, we described how the unique character of each county resulted in differences in Cal-Learn operations from county to county. Four local administrative entities, GAIN, AFDC, AFLP and the schools have a role to play in the operation of the program. Achieving the policy goals of the program is therefore dependent on successful coordination among these different organizations. The program's design is complicated because each local agency has different yet interlinking responsibilities for the operation of the program. AFDC refers teens to the program and, in three of the four counties studied, AFDC deducts sanctions from their monthly grants. GAIN determines program eligibility; authorizes and pays bonuses and supportive services, including child care and transportation; authorizes (and in Alameda County deducts) sanctions; and refers teens to AFLPs for case management services. AFLP agencies contract with GAIN to provide comprehensive case management services to assist teens with a myriad of health, psychosocial and school related issues. Schools were responsible for educating Cal-Learn teens, but were given no formal role in administering the program. Dividing the operational responsibilities of the program in this way was intended to capitalize on the strengths, pre-existing capacities and infrastructures of the participating agencies. However, it created challenges, including those of transcending the local barriers to coordination and creating new channels of communication for efficient operation of the program.

In 1997, we continued to hear that county-level coordination was hampered by the limited degree with which local agencies were able to share information about clients. It would have been much easier to coordinate the program had all the agencies shared a common Cal-Learn computer system. However, AFDC, GAIN and the AFLP agencies each maintain their own separate and distinct data systems, which are generally restricted in use to internal staff. The exception to this was in Los Angeles, where AFLP agencies were provided with GEARS (GAIN's system) terminals at the start of the Cal-Learn program. This proved advantageous in some ways, and yet it created a number of other problems which are described later in this report. Overall, linking and modifying automated data systems for Cal-Learn program and evaluation purposes was done parsimoniously out of concerns for maintaining client confidentiality, and because implementing major revisions to data systems needed to be weighed against their substantial costs. Moreover, such changes would have disturbed pre-existing schedules for systems modifications and possibly generated new problems. Most of the major changes to computer information systems were undertaken prior to 1996, and these were described in the first Cal-Learn process evaluation report. In 1997, we were told that county computer system problems continued to impede coordination required for the Cal-Learn program.

*AFDC and GAIN.* In general, Cal-Learn requires that AFDC and GAIN coordinate in two primary areas: the referral by AFDC to GAIN of all pregnant and parenting teens on aid without

a high school diploma and the processing of Cal-Learn sanctions. It was determined early on in the Cal-Learn planning process that bonuses would be issued directly by GAIN or other specialized staff due to timeliness concerns. GAIN and AFDC needed to develop rapid referral and sanctioning processes both because of the brief window of time during which teens are eligible for Cal-Learn, and because teens must encounter bonuses and sanctions quickly if they are to serve as effective incentives, according to theories on the psychology of motivation.

We found that the problems of identifying and referring all Cal-Learn eligible teens to the program had not improved by 1997, and in fact, there was evidence that they had gotten worse. The reasons for this have to do with continuing changes in AFDC rules and operations. These issues are discussed in detail later in this report.

Our earlier paper reported that all the research counties, except Los Angeles, were routinely imposing Cal-Learn sanctions about two months after they had been recommended by an AFLP case manager. Los Angeles was unable to begin imposing sanctions until June 1996, at which point some teens had accumulated eight months of unprocessed pending sanctions. The delay in Los Angeles was attributed to computer programming difficulties with the GAIN Employment and Activity Reporting System. By the beginning of 1997, Los Angeles had caught up with all the pending Cal-Learn sanctions, and they too were routinely imposing sanctions about two months after the recommendation was received.

In our previous report we noted that the achievement of the two month turn-around time for imposing sanctions was the result of assigning a limited number of staff to this task, rather than relying on generic AFDC eligibility staff. AFDC staff interviewed for this report regard it as essential that specialized staff be assigned to Cal-Learn sanctioning because EWs are often unfamiliar with Cal-Learn. Counties consider two months time to be the minimum needed to process a sanction, in part because regulations require that counties allow clients time to appeal any planned reduction in their benefits.

*GAIN and AFLP.* We found that the relationships between GAIN and AFLP had stabilized or improved somewhat in 1997. In general, relationships could be described as cordial and cooperative, although because of the way that relationships are structured as contractor/vendor, a certain amount of inherent tension remains both apparent and unavoidable. Our earlier report noted that GAIN and AFLP agencies had little experience working together prior to Cal-Learn, and the development of trust and cooperation took time and considerable effort. In the early years of the Cal-Learn program, for example, we found that many GAIN staff resented the fact that Cal-Learn required that they contract with AFLPs for Cal-Learn case management. As one GAIN employee stated, "We were doing it [case management], and we were doing it competently. Now we've just got different people doing it and there's more of it. I hate to see GAIN efforts belittled just because we've invented a new name for the program and started contracting the case management out." Some GAIN workers also resented that under Cal-Learn their contact with clients was practically eliminated, since AFLP provides case management services. As one GAIN worker expressed it: "We were reduced to mere paper pushers." Over the course of three years, as individual GAIN and AFLP workers got to know each other, most, though not all of this resentment gradually dissipated. We found that GAIN and AFLP



relationships were best where there were frequent face-to-face contacts between the agency personnel and where there was infrequent turnover among Cal-Learn staff.

Good relationships between GAIN workers and AFLP case managers are considered key to the smooth operation of the Cal-Learn program. This is because each agency depends on accurate and timely information on clients from the other agency to do their job well. Communication problems between GAIN and AFLP sometimes damaged these relationships. For example, AFLP agencies often complained that they get referrals from GAIN with outdated addresses and missing phone numbers. They are frustrated by this because finding these clients requires additional work. In a similar vein, GAIN workers in all four counties complained that despite three years of working with AFLP case managers on how to fill out GAIN child care forms, case managers still frequently submitted these forms improperly filled out or with needed information missing. In some cases, GAIN workers would call case managers to obtain information over the telephone. In other cases, GAIN workers sent forms back through the mail, thereby delaying payments.

Some of the coordination problems between GAIN and AFLP in 1997 were the result of the inherently conflicting roles of the two agencies. Cal-Learn is designed so that GAIN is responsible for authorizing funds, while AFLP case managers are chiefly advocates for their clients. Their conflicting roles sometimes manifest in processing delays in the payment of bonuses or the imposition of sanctions, and delays in child care and ancillary payment approvals. GAIN, for example, relies on case manager recommendations about bonuses and sanctions and the need for other paid supportive services. When GAIN questions a bonus or supportive service recommendation, it usually results in a delay in its receipt. This can also put a strain on the interagency relationship. The following quote by a case manager illustrates this rather common occurrence. "I had a real hard time getting child care paid [by GAIN] in one case... I feel that they should take our word for it. I mean, why are we there? If we know the situation in the home...we recommend it, they should get it. I just don't think that they should question us."

There are some unique aspects to the GAIN/AFLP relationships in each of the four research counties. In Los Angeles, where GEARS terminals are provided to the AFLP agencies, AFLPs confirm teens' eligibility for the program, register them into Cal-Learn, and enter other important information such as client orientation dates and report card schedules. This is both a benefit and a burden to the Los Angeles AFLPs. On the one hand, they can independently obtain some information on clients in GEARS, and even occasionally find eligible clients who were overlooked by GAIN. However, they have an increased workload since they must "clear" GAIN's referral list of potentially eligible clients each month. This means that AFLP staff have to sort through all of the Cal-Learn referrals and determine which ones are in fact program eligible. AFLPs report that between one third to one half of all the referrals on these lists are not eligible for the program. In Alameda, San Joaquin, and San Bernardino, only GAIN workers have access to the Cal-Learn database and therefore only GAIN can register new clients into the program.

In Alameda, GAIN holds monthly, biweekly or weekly orientation meetings depending on the volume of eligible teens identified, and co-facilitates the meetings with AFLP staff. At these orientations, clients are referred to AFLPs. If clients fail to show up for the orientation, GAIN

reschedules their appointment and forwards their information to one of the two AFLP agencies for outreach and individualized orientation sessions. San Bernardino requires a face-to-face meeting between its GAIN workers, clients, and child care providers before they will authorize child care payments. In the other counties, clients fill out GAIN child care paperwork, usually with the assistance of their AFLP case manager, and mail it to GAIN for processing and approval.

*AFLPs and Schools.* When designing the Cal-Learn program, it was not clear exactly how much coordinating AFLP case managers would need to undertake with the schools. The program design is tailored to work best where schools issue four report cards per year with letter grades that can easily be used to determine whether a Cal-Learn bonus or sanction is deserved. However, in practice AFLPs found that many Cal-Learn clients enroll in non-traditional programs, including alternative education and independent studies programs, which often don't issue standard grades, or which provide progress reports in lieu of grades, often on an irregular schedule. To standardize measures of progress for Cal-Learn bonus and sanction purposes, the AFLPs began developing their own simplified report card forms in 1995, which by 1996 were in use at all of the AFLP agencies and most of the alternative school programs. These forms were still being introduced into schools in 1997. AFLP case managers give Cal-Learn progress report forms to their clients or directly to the teachers at alternative school programs to fill out according to a predetermined report card schedule. However, since Cal-Learn regulations carry no weight with local school districts, neither GAIN nor the AFLPs have any legal recourse if schools refuse to cooperate.

Some AFLP agencies negotiated formal MOU arrangements with school districts when Cal-Learn was first implemented to better define school and AFLP roles and responsibilities with regard to Cal-Learn. However, in 1997 we found that these MOU agreements were not in operation. Those who knew of them said that these were, for the most part, paper agreements without any real meaning. The real success of the coordination between the AFLPs and the schools, they reported, depends mostly on the individual relationships forged by case managers with key school staff, as well as the attitudes of school administrators toward teen parents in their schools.

### III. CLIENT IDENTIFICATION AND DECLINING CASELOADS

Since the start of the program, identifying all of the Cal-Learn eligible teens has proved to be one of Cal-Learn’s most significant and enduring problems. Since peaking in the Spring of 1996, the statewide Cal-Learn caseload has been declining steadily. This has created difficulties for AFLP agencies who, having geared up for dramatic caseload increases just two years earlier, were unexpectedly facing issues of downsizing. A few AFLP agencies had to lay off staff and close offices, but most agencies coped with the decline in their Cal-Learn caseload through natural attrition of staff, and by transferring case managers to other programs. Table 2 shows how Cal-Learn caseloads declined in 1997. While there is no definitive explanation for this decrease, agency staff from AFDC, GAIN and AFLP who have investigated this issue attribute it to multiple factors, some internal and some external to the operation of the program.

**Table 2**  
**1997 Cal-Learn Caseloads**

	Alameda	San Joaquin	Los Angeles	San Bernardino	Statewide
January	767	445	7072	1354	20,258
December	557	373	4681	1003	15,009
% Drop	27%	16%	34%	25%	35%

*Source: CDSS Information Services Bureau*

External factors contributing to the decline in the Cal-Learn caseload include declining teen birth rates and a substantial drop in AFDC caseloads overall in California. Teen birth rates in California have been declining steadily since 1991<sup>9</sup>, and the latest available figures from the California Department of Health Services reveal that between 1995 and 1996, rates declined by 9% in Los Angeles and San Bernardino, 11% in Alameda, and 14% in San Joaquin. Information provided by CDSS indicates that AFDC caseloads began declining in California in fiscal year ‘95-96, and in 1997 AFDC caseloads in the four research counties declined 11-13%. Still, declines in AFDC caseloads are considerably lower than the Cal-Learn caseload decline.

Thus, external factors do not account entirely for the drop in Cal-Learn numbers. As we discuss below, there have been ongoing problems identifying Cal-Learn eligible teens. Additionally, welfare reform and other operational changes within the welfare offices may also be contributing to these declines.

#### **Finding and Enrolling Teens**

We found that the major internal obstacles to finding and registering Cal-Learn eligible teens were, and continue to be missing codes in the welfare administrative databases; insufficient knowledge among AFDC staff about Cal-Learn; and special problems finding nested teens. GAIN and AFLP agencies have instituted some strategies to address these problems.

*Identification codes.* Prior to Cal-Learn, none of the counties had identifiers in their AFDC automated systems to allow for extraction of the names of pregnant and parenting teens in the databases. The information needed to determine Cal-Learn eligibility—whether there were

pregnant or parenting teens under age 19 without a high school diploma on a case—was not collected by welfare workers until Cal-Learn made it necessary. CWDs changed their AFDC automated systems to allow AFDC EWs to flag pregnant and parenting teens prior to implementation of the program in the four research counties. In 1997, there remained a number of problems with the reliability of the codes used to refer Cal-Learn eligible teens to GAIN. For example, codes are often missing or wrong because AFDC staff don't know them or they enter codes in error. In San Joaquin, the problem was more complex because the county converted to a new AFDC database (SAWS) at the same time that it was implementing Cal-Learn. In all four counties, the coding process is obscured by the fact that the teen parent code is located in an area on the aid application reserved for GAIN program status variables, which EWs normally review only when a case is first opened, or re-determined for eligibility. In San Bernardino and San Joaquin, there are still no electronic linkages between the AFDC and GAIN automated information systems, and therefore computer codes are only marginally useful for referring teens to Cal-Learn.

In Los Angeles, identification of Cal-Learn clients is automated and bypasses GAIN staff completely. Monthly Cal-Learn referral lists are generated automatically through an interface between GEARS (the GAIN system) and IBPS (the AFDC system). The monthly lists generated by this interface are then sent by the county's Computer Services Division directly to the AFLP agencies for further scrutiny, eligibility determination, and enrollment into the program. The system depends on EWs entering precise codes into IBPS indicating family relationships and assigning a child on the case to a teen parent. At times, however, teen parents' children are coded incorrectly as the grandchild of the head of the assistance unit, or relationships are not defined at all, making it impossible to determine that a teen is Cal-Learn eligible. The IBPS system lacks prompts to indicate such errors. IBPS will not be modified to rectify these problems, however, because Los Angeles County is developing a new eligibility system, called LEADER.

*Insufficient Knowledge of Cal-Learn Among AFDC Staff.* Before Cal-Learn began, EWs in all the counties received training on the rules and eligibility criteria for Cal-Learn participation. Since then, counties have occasionally included Cal-Learn in their on-going inservice and re-training programs for EW staff. GAIN, AFLP and AFDC staff interviewed for this report believed that a fundamental reason for the decline in the Cal-Learn caseload is that many AFDC eligibility workers still lack sufficient knowledge about Cal-Learn. EWs are unfamiliar with the Cal-Learn program because it affects so few AFDC cases. According to CDSS figures, in 1997 in the four research counties, Cal-Learn cases accounted for only about 2% of all AFDC cases. In the high pressure environment of welfare offices, where workers primarily focus on determining eligibility for cash aid, Medicaid and food stamps, special rules and codes which apply only to Cal-Learn teens may be easy to overlook. For example, one EW showed us that there are just two pages of regulations pertaining to Cal-Learn in a six inch stack of regulations that EWs are expected to know and use in the course of determining AFDC eligibility. The program's relative obscurity, in combination with other system changes discussed below, plus the need for EWs to focus on welfare reform in 1997 were believed by those interviewed for this report to be major reasons why Cal-Learn caseloads have continued to decline.

Problems identifying clients affected not only new clients, but also those who had breaks in aid or who opened their own case. AFLP and GAIN staff confirmed that many times when their Cal-Learn clients went off aid temporarily, they were not re-referred to Cal-Learn when they came back onto AFDC. Similarly, they found that when teens turned age 18 and opened their own cases, they were often not re-referred to Cal-Learn. Moreover, the information clients provide about their high school graduation status is only verified with official school documentation in Alameda County. If a teen parent tells her EW that she has graduated in the other three research counties, she will probably not be referred to Cal-Learn.

*Finding Nested Teens.* In all of the counties, finding nested teens—teens who receive AFDC as part of another’s case—proved particularly difficult. Teens with their own case were easier to find because counties could generate lists of cases headed by a teen and then ask EWs to review these for possible Cal-Learn referrals. However, because there weren’t teen parent codes in AFDC systems prior to Cal-Learn, there was no easy way to screen for nested cases. Alameda, San Bernardino, and San Joaquin have periodically asked AFDC EWs to review all of their cases in search of Cal-Learn eligible teens and these reviews have uncovered some nested cases. Case reviews appear to be the only reliable method for uncovering nested teens, but due to the small number of potentially eligible clients and the large workload of EW’s, such reviews are rare. In Los Angeles, the initial computer algorithm for identifying eligible teens through GEARS failed to account for nested teens. When the algorithm was changed, huge referral lists were generated that included ineligible AFDC recipients. L.A. has continued to try to refine the computer logic used to create the Cal-Learn referral list; however, by 1997, finding nested teens was still problematic.

*Alternative Strategies for Finding Cal-Learn Cases.* To compensate for the shortcomings of AFDC’s procedures for identifying Cal-Learn cases, GAIN staff in two of the research counties implemented strategies to find Cal-Learn eligible cases on the welfare rolls. Alameda GAIN registers into Cal-Learn *all* new AFDC cases with a head of household under the age of 19. If teens provide proof of graduation, then they are subsequently de-registered as “erroneously referred.” This leaves the possibility that some teens, technically ineligible for the program, remain in the program simply because they fail to come forward with proof of high school graduation or GED receipt. While this process brings additional teens into the program, these tend to be teens who open their own cases, rather than nested teens. San Joaquin has periodically enlisted one of its GAIN workers to search through SAWS for teen parents who may have been missed by EWs, and enrolled them into Cal-Learn without an official AFDC referral. San Bernardino’s GAIN staff initially were so understaffed and so overwhelmed with Cal-Learn referrals from AFDC and AFLP that they did not undertake any additional case-finding activity. Although fully staffed in 1997, San Bernardino GAIN administrators still did not ask their GAIN technicians to undertake any additional case-finding activity.

AFLP staff also play a role in identifying teens for Cal-Learn. For example, most AFLP agencies expanded their outreach activities to find pregnant and parenting teens on welfare at schools and health clinics. The magnitude of the AFLP outreach activities, however, varied by county and with the outlook of the particular agency. Alameda, San Joaquin, and San Bernardino AFLPs are limited to referring pregnant and parenting teens who they think are eligible for Cal-Learn to GAIN for registration into the program. Only in Los Angeles do AFLPs have a formal role in

the Cal-Learn registration process. Because AFLPs there have the ability to access information in GEARS they can sometimes find siblings of teens on the Cal-Learn referral lists who should be referred but are not. Some of the AFLPs in L.A. inform GAIN when they have found such cases, and then wait for GAIN to add their names to an official Cal-Learn referral list. Other AFLP agencies go ahead and enroll these teens into Cal-Learn once they have determined them to be program eligible because waiting for GAIN can delay services to teens for several months.

### **Welfare reform and systemic changes in AFDC**

*AFDC Office Reorganization.* There have been significant changes in county AFDC operations affecting all AFDC recipients since Cal-Learn start-up, and the number of changes increased in 1997. AFDC offices have moved increasingly towards more automated systems for processing their caseloads. This change, driven by improvements in technology as well as by the inability of workers to keep up with the ever changing, increasingly complex welfare rules, has resulted in decreased personal contact between clients and workers. In Alameda and Los Angeles, the majority of cases in 1997 were being handled through a banking system whereby specialized staff perform specific functions on any case, as opposed to being responsible for a defined caseload. Under Alameda's banking system, clients with questions are advised to call a 1-800 number which, depending on their particular need, branches them off to a specialized worker. As one Alameda County AFDC intake worker explained it, "I tell clients that I am probably the last real person that they'll ever get to talk to". In L.A., banking means that most clients interact with whomever answers the phone or comes to the window, rather than with an assigned eligibility worker. What this means for Cal-Learn is that AFDC workers may not recognize when there are Cal-Learn eligible teens on a case. If a teen is not referred to the program at intake, she or he may not get identified as Cal-Learn eligible until a year later, at re-certification, since this is the time that counties ordinarily review case information.

*Welfare Reform.* After August 1996, counties began gearing up for the implementation of TANF, and new issues began interfering with the referral of potential Cal-Learn clients. Although CalWORKs did not pass until August 1997, some counties began experimenting with their AFDC intake procedures earlier than this, diverting new applicants for aid into job search activities, concurrent with or prior to approving them for aid. San Bernardino and San Joaquin counties, for example, created several "pilot" intake units in 1997 which required AFDC applicants to attend job search activities for a period of time before their applications would be approved. Los Angeles County began operating a similar program called "GAP". However, participants in the GAP program were volunteers, whereas in San Bernardino and San Joaquin, assignment to a pilot intake unit was random. Alameda County did not experiment with such changes. All four demonstration counties were planning either to begin or to expand these procedures throughout their intake units in 1998. These changes, and their accompanying publicity were offered by GAIN and AFDC staff as another explanation for the decrease in Cal-Learn caseloads, and for welfare caseloads generally.

Although Cal-Learn eligible teens were specifically exempt from these pilot eligibility requirements, in practice, such exemptions were not always applied. For example, we heard from several of the AFLP agencies that when Cal-Learn clients applied for their own cases at age 18, they were referred to pilot units, other GAIN program components, or welfare "diversion" programs, instead of being re-referred to Cal-Learn. In at least one case described to us, a

graduation bonus was delayed by several months while GAIN and AFDC resolved a mix-up of this sort. It is impossible to determine how frequently such “mistakes” were made, although one AFDC intake supervisor told us that she knew of several cases in which Cal-Learn eligible teens had been sent to Job Club incorrectly, and that sometimes teens preferred to go to Job Club rather than to Cal-Learn. GAIN rules, however, forbid simultaneous enrollment in Cal-Learn and Job Club.

Even when teens are handled properly, the new work requirements are believed to discourage some teens, and adults with teen parent dependents, from applying for aid thereby precluding otherwise eligible teen parents from receiving Cal-Learn program services. AFLP, GAIN and AFDC staff all expressed concerns that publicity about welfare reform discouraged eligible teens and their families from applying for welfare. For example, CWD staff felt that an increased emphasis on paternity disclosure kept some teens from seeking assistance. Those interviewed for this report mentioned three specific welfare reforms as probably contributing to declining Cal-Learn caseloads: the Maximum Family Grant, AB 908, and the elimination of the State-only Pregnancy Special Needs Payment (SB 1708).

*Maximum Family Grant.* Under the Maximum Family Grant rule, effective September 1, 1997, grants do not increase if there are additional births while the mother is on aid. Regardless, teen parents are still mandated to be in Cal-Learn, even if their assistance unit does not receive additional aid for their children. It is believed by those interviewed for this report that some families are not reporting births because of this rule, and as a result, eligible teen parents may not be getting referred to Cal-Learn.

*AB 908 - Teen Pregnancy Disincentive.* Effective March 1, 1997, any pregnant or parenting minor applying for AFDC must be living with a parent, legal guardian, other adult relative, or in an adult-supervised living arrangement as a condition of receiving aid.<sup>10</sup> The PRWORA also includes this mandate. Although the law allows several exemptions to this requirement, it was the belief of those interviewed for this report that many teen parents are confused and uninformed about the exemptions allowed. Some eligible teens, therefore, may not apply for aid because they believe that they will be denied.

*Elimination of the State-only Pregnancy Special Needs Payment (SB 1708).* Effective September 1, 1996, pregnant women with no other eligible children who apply for AFDC can only receive AFDC and pregnancy special need payments during the third trimester of pregnancy. Prior to this bill, pregnant women could receive benefits during both the second and third trimesters of pregnancy. Pregnant teens, under 19, without a high school diploma were specifically exempted from this provision, and thus they remain eligible for second trimester benefits. As with the AB 908 exemptions, it is believed that some pregnant teens are unaware of exemptions to the general rules. Further, it is the belief of those interviewed for this report that some AFDC eligibility workers are not aware of the teen parent exemption because it applies to so few welfare cases. Therefore, some pregnant teens may not have come onto aid until their third trimester, although they were eligible to receive aid several months sooner.

#### IV. BONUSES AND SANCTIONS

Borrowing from theories on the psychology of motivation, Cal-Learn uses financial incentives to motivate and reinforce teens to complete their high school education or equivalency degree. County agencies involved in the implementation of Cal-Learn put considerable effort into designing and executing a system that would fairly and quickly pay bonuses and deduct sanctions. Preliminary results from a telephone survey<sup>11</sup> of teens in the evaluation study who knew they were in the Cal-Learn program (about two-thirds), indicate that a substantial percentage of teens were confused by or not fully aware of this aspect of the program. Of those teens subject to bonuses and sanctions, teens seemed to be mindful of bonuses, particularly the graduation bonus, more so than sanctions. Early results indicate that somewhat more than half of those subject to bonuses and sanctions understood that they could be sanctioned for failing to turn in a report card; and two-thirds of those subject to bonuses and sanctions knew that they could get a sanction for turning in a failing report card or progress report. On the other hand, three-quarters of this same group were aware that they could get a bonus for satisfactory progress, and even more knew that they could get a \$500 graduation bonus. For some reason, even some of those *not* eligible to receive one, about one-third, believed they *could* get a satisfactory progress or graduation bonus, and about one-fourth of those *not eligible* believed they *could* be sanctioned. Whether or not they knew they were in Cal-Learn, most teens think that the idea of cash incentives is fair and useful for keeping kids in school although fewer think the idea of sanctions is fair or useful for keeping kids in school (about two out of three).

Putting bonuses and sanctions into place in the counties was one of the most difficult aspects of the Cal-Learn program. Several new and complex tasks were added to the responsibilities of GAIN, AFDC, and AFLP staff that required securing the cooperation of the schools and the teens. New tasks included defining report card schedules, collecting and interpreting report cards, and issuing bonus checks or deducting sanctions from clients' AFDC grants. In addition to these new responsibilities there were the usual problems associated with integrating new codes into the management information systems used by the agencies. In Los Angeles, for example, because of programming delays, sanctions were not put into effect until a full year after the rest of the program had been implemented.

Defining the due date for report cards and interpreting school performance for bonus and sanction purposes proved to be more difficult than initially envisioned. This was because Cal-Learn teens attend a wide variety of programs with an equally vast assortment of marking periods and evaluation systems. For example, in June 1997, San Bernardino Cal-Learn research teens with AFLP case managers were enrolled in more than 85 different school programs.

The alternative types of programs teens attend also have implications for the Cal-Learn program and the evaluation because they tend not to issue standard report cards. Moreover, many of the alternative programs that offer progress reports do not assign letter grades, or they offer variable credits with grades. Case managers and GAIN workers have often found it challenging to obtain progress reports from schools and then to interpret them for bonus or sanction recommendations. Figure 2 provides an example of a progress report from a continuation high school in San Bernardino County. While the teen has a GPA sufficient to earn a bonus, she has not earned as many credits as are generally considered by the school to qualify as sufficient



progress for the marking period. In cases like these, we were told that case managers and GAIN workers often negotiate the awarding of bonuses or the imposition of a sanction.

**Figure 2**  
**Example of Alternative School Report Card**

<b>PERIOD</b>	<b>CLASS</b>	<b>ENTRY DATE</b>	<b>QUARTER CREDITS EARNED*</b>	<b>GRADE TO DATE</b>	<b>CITIZENSHIP</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
1	General Math	9/23	1	A	S-	
2	U.S. History	12/10	3	C	S-	completes required work
3	English	9/23	1	C-	S-	makes crude and foul remarks
4	Science	9/23	2	B+	S	works well, rarely attends class
5	Physical Educ.	12/10	2	C	S-	

\*satisfactory progress equals 3 credits per class each quarter

By design, some Cal-Learn teens may receive neither a bonus or a sanction, contingent on their school progress. Teens who earn a grade point average between 1.0 and 1.9 receive a recommendation of “adequate progress” and no grant adjustment is made. Also, some teens are not in the program long enough to experience bonuses and sanctions. Cal-Learn clients are not eligible to receive a bonus or sanction until they complete a 90-day participation period, which starts the first day of the month after they are enrolled. They become subject to financial incentives as of the first report card issued after this time period. If, for example, a teen enters the program in March, the first report card she will be required to submit for a bonus or sanction may not be until November, even though she receives a report card in May. By that time, the teen may have graduated, turned 19 or gone off aid for another reason. If a teen cycles on and off aid, he or she also may never meet the participation requirements for a bonus or sanction, regardless of school achievement.

Now that Cal-Learn has been operating for several years, bonuses are generally being issued within a month after a report card is submitted. Sanctions typically take about two months because of general AFDC rules concerning the client’s right to appeal a grant reduction notice. AFLP case managers believe that the behavioral impact of bonuses and sanctions is diminished significantly by time lags between actual school performance, the issuance of the report card, and the eventual payment of a bonus or the imposition of a sanction. Moreover, teens on their parents’ case are somewhat insulated from the full effect of bonuses and sanctions because, except for graduation bonuses, these accrue to the head of the assistance unit.

Although teens are sent informing notices about their sanctions, other changes in basic monthly grant calculations sometimes make it difficult for teens to discern when a Cal-Learn sanction has, in fact, been deducted from their grant. This is not a problem with bonuses as these are issued in separate checks. In addition to the usual grant changes associated with earned income or case composition changes, there were changes to the grant levels of all welfare recipients during 1996

and 1997 which may have caused confusion on the part of Cal-Learn teens about whether they had actually received a bonus or sanction under Cal-Learn rules.

The first change occurred in June 1996, when California implemented a settlement to the Beno<sup>12</sup> class action suit challenging welfare benefit reductions. The state adopted a two-tiered MAP system, with all cases receiving either an increase or a decrease, depending on whether the assistance unit (AU) was classified as “exempt” or “non-exempt”. Exempt AUs had their benefits returned to the higher 1992 MAP levels. Non-exempt AUs had their benefit levels reduced.

In October 1996, five months after the implementation of the two tiered MAP system, the CDSS Research Branch directed the four evaluation counties to exempt all teens in the Cal-Learn research sample whether in school or not. The reason cited for this was that the Beno settlement creates a separate incentive for teens to enroll in school, which undermines the testing of Cal-Learn financial incentives in isolation. The four counties agreed to this request, although they told us that there were difficulties in putting it into practice.

Until January 1, 1998, the Cal-Learn population in general remained subject to the two-tiered MAP which ties grant levels to teens’ school status independent of Cal-Learn, and treats nested and non-nested cases differently. For nested teens to be considered exempt, their parent(s) must also qualify as exempt. Although informing notices were sent to recipients outlining the reasons for all of these changes to their grant, the impact of Cal-Learn sanctions may have been somewhat blunted by MAP increases that occurred coincidentally. In L.A., for example, the first Cal-Learn sanctions were not implemented until June 1996, the same month that the Beno settlement was implemented. Thus, non-nested teens enrolled in school with sanctions pending would have had the impact of their first sanction muted by the automatic increase in their grant.

AFDC grants were regionalized and further cut in January 1997 (SB 1780, 1996). Grant levels were decreased by 4.9% in L.A. and Alameda counties, and by 9.56% in San Bernardino and San Joaquin counties where housing costs are lower. This meant \$62 less in the monthly grant of an AU of three in San Bernardino and San Joaquin counties, and \$30 less for an AU of three in Alameda and Los Angeles counties. According to AFLP case managers, who are often called on to help explain changes in welfare grants to teens, clients are often confused about whether they got a Cal-Learn sanction, or whether their grant was changed for some other reason.

## V. SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Cal-Learn teens who are attending school are eligible to receive financial support for child care, transportation, and school-related expenses, such as books or testing fees. However, utilization of funds in all of these areas has been quite low.

### **Child Care**

Cal-Learn teens have access to funding for child care if they are enrolled in school. GAIN administrators applied their previously established procedures for disbursing child care funds to Cal-Learn clients, with the exception that AFLP case managers are now available to assist teens with the paperwork. Relatively few Cal-Learn teens have utilized the child care funding available to them. A CDSS Cal-Learn Policy Unit analysis of Cal-Learn child care usage (August, 1997) found that only about 9% of teens statewide utilized Cal-Learn child care funding.<sup>13</sup> This may be due to several factors including the underutilization of child care outside the home and other factors discussed below. Of the teens surveyed, during a typical week, most children of Cal-Learn teens do not spend any time in institutional child care arrangements; only about one in ten teen parents have their children in institutional child care, defined as day care centers, family day care homes, Head Start, nursery school or preschool.

The Cal-Learn program will reimburse child care providers only for the time the teen is actually attending school plus their travel time to or from school, and teens must attend school a minimum of 10 hours per week to receive Cal-Learn child care funding. Many teens mandated to be in Cal-Learn are not in school and therefore are ineligible for child care funds. Others attend school programs that allow them to bring their babies with them; and many of the alternative schools, such as independent studies programs, require that students attend fewer than 10 hours/week. Also contributing to the low utilization of child care funds is the fact that teens may enter Cal-Learn while they are pregnant with their first child. Finally, due to the young age of some Cal-Learn clients, they are more likely to be living at home with family members. When a Cal-Learn teen needs child care assistance, therefore, she or he is more likely to have family members available to turn to for help.

AFLP case managers in all of the counties studied reported that Cal-Learn teens prefer to leave their children with a relative or someone they know, especially when their children are infants. They reported that teens distrust day care centers and fear child abuse like that shown in sensational media reports. Preliminary results from the survey of teens confirmed this observation. Of those teens who were attending school or in independent studies, slightly fewer than half had someone they lived with watch their child, while slightly more than half had someone else watch their child or they took care of the child themselves. In this same group, of the teens who did *not* take care of their child(ren) themselves, over two-thirds relied on child care provided by their mother, another relative or their current partner.

Teen parents sometimes find GAIN's system for authorizing and paying for child care difficult to use and unresponsive to their frequently changing needs, according to GAIN and AFLP staff. The teen's first choice of child care provider often cannot be paid because GAIN regulations do not allow payment to others in the same AU, those under age 18, or undocumented immigrants. Thus, if the mother of a teen parent is also aided, she can not be paid for babysitting her

grandchild. Most school-based child care centers are also ineligible to receive Cal-Learn funding due to a clause in the legislation that states that these funds can not be used to supplant existing sources of funding.

Cal-Learn will only pay for child care that has been pre-authorized. This has created problems for some teens who frequently change child care providers, and then get caught in a financial bind when their new provider has yet to be authorized. Newly mandated Trustline<sup>14</sup> procedures and federal safety requirements added in November 1996 complicated the documentation requirements for reimbursement to unlicensed child care providers. Cal-Learn case managers report that their clients need the child care reimbursement rules explained repeatedly and require substantial support with the paperwork. A positive working relationship between GAIN administrators and AFLP case managers sometimes facilitates the processing of child care paperwork, but poor relationships can hinder the process. For example, some GAIN workers complained that certain case managers consistently fill out the child care paperwork incorrectly. Sending the paperwork back to be corrected by case managers delays payment to providers, which usually takes 4-6 weeks after submission of a claim.

GAIN's documentation requirements have discouraged some providers from accepting Cal-Learn clients. We heard of a few instances where GAIN had to make concessions to licensed child care providers in order to prevent them from pulling out of the program. For example, when a teen misses school for several days but still brings her child to the provider, some counties forbid payment to the provider for the days that the teen was absent. In several counties, GAIN has been more flexible, covering costs for those days to avoid punishing providers for the actions of their clients. In addition, to reduce the paperwork burden, some counties have removed requirements that child care providers and school staff match student attendance records, instead allowing teens and case managers to certify school attendance.

### **Transportation**

The Cal-Learn program pays for transportation required by students to get to and from their school and child care providers. Utilization of transportation funding, while greater than that of child care, is still relatively low in the demonstration counties. In 1997, only 7% of the average monthly caseload in San Joaquin accessed transportation funding each month. The numbers were slightly higher in the other three counties: 13% in Los Angeles, 18% in San Bernardino, and 21% in Alameda County (Source: CDSS, Information Services Bureau). The reasons for the generally low utilization of transportation funding offered to us by GAIN, AFLP and school staff interviewed included the following: many teens are not in school each month, either because they are not enrolled or they are on vacation; some students attend schools that offer their own transportation or provide students with bus passes; some teens have access to rides from their friends and family; and some teens prefer not to go through the "red tape" necessary to get reimbursed by GAIN.

GAIN procedures for authorizing and paying transportation expenses are the same for Cal-Learn teens as they are for GAIN adult clients. Prior to authorizing payment, GAIN requires proof of school enrollment and a schedule of classes. Thereafter, counties differ as to how strictly they verify school attendance. In Alameda and Los Angeles counties, GAIN relies on the word of the teens and the AFLP case managers that teens are attending school regularly. In San Bernardino

and San Joaquin, however, students must produce daily attendance reports from the schools every month. Depending upon the teen's school schedule, GAIN issues either a monthly bus pass, a check to cover the amount of a bus pass, or a one-month supply of single ride tickets to Cal-Learn students. AFLP case managers usually assist teens with their applications and documentation for travel expenses.

In 1997, we found that the GAIN office in San Bernardino had implemented new procedures with the AFLP to streamline the disbursement of bus passes to clients. Rather than having AFLP case managers complete individual transportation request forms for each client each month, they began submitting a single transportation request form with the names of all those who needed bus passes in that month. San Bernardino also began to allow case managers rather than their GAIN workers to issue bus passes to the clients. Our sources reported that this process was often appreciated by clients because it saved them a trip to the GAIN office; it was also valued by the case managers because it gave them something tangible to offer their clients. The process was particularly helpful when case managers were having difficulty meeting with some of their unwilling Cal-Learn clients.

In San Joaquin, AFLP staff lobbied to get Cal-Learn clients monthly bus passes rather than daily tokens. GAIN had initially resisted monthly passes, expressing concern that monthly passes would allow teens to use Cal-Learn funds for non-school purposes, such as going to the mall. AFLP argued that monthly passes would be cheaper and more efficient, and that teens could also use them to get to pre-natal and other medical appointments, job interviews, and other purposes in line with the mission and intent of AFLP and Cal-Learn.

In Los Angeles, Cal-Learn teens receive transportation checks through the mail to purchase monthly bus pass stickers. Some school staff and case managers expressed concern that often these checks arrive late, after the first of the month, forcing teens to ask others for bus money. Moreover, because they are not clearly labeled as being for transportation purposes, sometimes teens cash the checks and use the money for other purposes.

### **Ancillary Expenses**

Ancillary expenses paid for under Cal-Learn program rules mostly covered books, supplies, testing fees for GED exams, and caps and gowns for graduation ceremonies. According to CDSS/Cal-Learn monthly statistical reports (Stat-45s), very few (1-3%) clients in an average month in the research counties utilized ancillary expense funds. When these funds were needed, it was generally the AFLP case manager who submitted the request for them to GAIN on behalf of the student. We found no major changes or issues with regard to ancillary expenses in 1997.

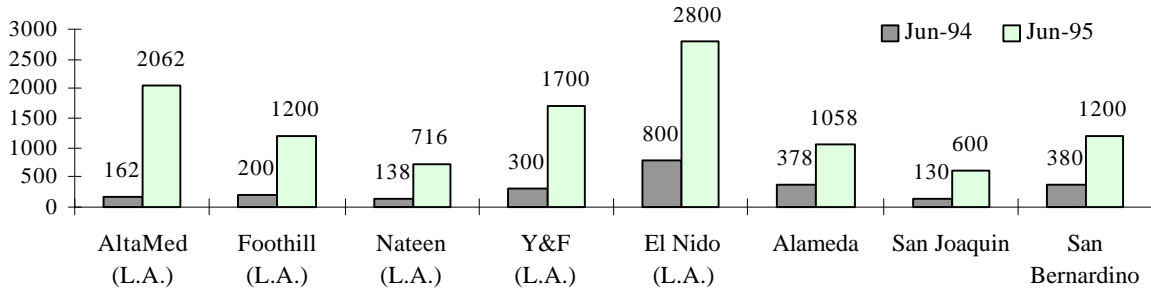
## VI. CASE MANAGEMENT

Cal-Learn mandated that case management be provided by AFLP agencies unless these agencies were unavailable, cost ineffective, or if the county had another teen services program that met the AFLP Standards of Practice. In all four research counties, AFLP agencies had been in existence for at least six years prior to Cal-Learn implementation, and these were the only agencies contracted with to provide Cal-Learn case management. Over the course of three years of interviews with AFLP agency staff we found that within the AFLP case management model there are a wide range of styles, and case managers perform a vast array of activities depending upon the specific problems presented by their client. Despite some differences among agencies, we found far more similarities in Cal-Learn case management practices in the four research counties. What holds the model together is the shared emphasis on the overall health and well-being of teen parents, the standard caseload limit of forty cases per case manager, and the mandated use of the Lodestar forms, which serve to focus and orient the case management process toward common AFLP goals.

Maintaining the integrity of the AFLP case management model in the face of the modifications prescribed by Cal-Learn was a challenge. The traditional AFLP model emphasized maternal and child health outcomes, and it assumed that clients served were there voluntarily.<sup>15</sup> Staff who had worked with the AFLP model both before and after Cal-Learn began noted changes in several areas: agency expansion, client characteristics, affiliation with county welfare departments, and school-related tasks. It should be noted that most AFLP case managers were hired after the Cal-Learn program began, and therefore do not have a basis of comparison with the earlier model.

As we discussed in our prior report, AFLP agencies underwent significant reorganization and expansion with the implementation of Cal-Learn. AFLP case managers are limited by regulation and contract to caseloads of no more than forty clients because they provide intensive case management services. Most of the AFLP agencies, at a minimum, had to triple the size of their staff over the course of the first year. Because they had to hire so many new staff so quickly, they sometimes had to hire case managers with lower qualifications and less experience than they had previously required. Agencies also had to expand their service areas into new communities, lease new office space and outfit offices with new equipment. Many of the agencies also added new levels of administrative staff to manage their expanded programs. As Figure 3 shows, caseload increases were dramatic and they had a significant impact on the stability and financial condition of many AFLP agencies. Negotiations over the availability of “start-up” funds delayed the start of the program in Los Angeles by six months, as start-up funds were not included in the original state budget for Cal-Learn. These funds were eventually allocated and reimbursed to counties after most had already begun their programs.

**Figure 3**  
**Number of AFLP Cases Before and After Cal-Learn Began**



*Data source: AFLP administrators*

*note: Alameda County figure combines the caseloads of two AFLP agencies*

Another aspect of the AFLP model that changed under Cal-Learn was the character of the client-case manager relationship. Cal-Learn clients must be offered case management, but they are sometimes resistant to receiving services, and they can even be hostile toward case managers. Because of their new affiliation with county welfare departments and Cal-Learn legislative requirements, case managers had to assume more authoritative roles with clients; enforcing school attendance, and recommending bonuses and sanctions. Despite the challenges of providing services to involuntary clients, case managers reported that they were often able to win reluctant clients over, at least to the point where they would cooperate on matters affecting the health and well-being of their children. Case managers also reported that at times they made special efforts to distance themselves from their connection to the County Welfare Department, because clients often viewed the CWD with fear and distrust.

There are time-consuming tasks required of AFLPs under their Cal-Learn contracts which strain case managers' roles under the traditional AFLP model. These additional activities leave case managers with less time to focus on psychosocial, health, and infant care issues. Among the new activities for case managers were the tasks associated with Cal-Learn's focus on education outcomes. Cal-Learn created a significant paperwork burden. Collecting and interpreting report cards for GAIN, filling out new Lodestar and GAIN forms which were created for Cal-Learn, and helping clients fill out their supportive services claims to GAIN were among the tasks that diverted case managers from meeting with clients.

It is hard to determine the extent to which or whether Cal-Learn case management services duplicate services available to non-clients. Certainly, many of the teens who were enrolled in alternative school programs were also being "case managed" to some extent by the teachers and counselors at the schools they attended. Preliminary results from the teen survey found that, of those who knew they were in Cal-Learn, almost all of the case-managed teens reported that they had a case manager, but so did three out of four of the teens in the bonus/sanction-no case management research condition. For survey purposes, case management was defined as "someone in the Cal-Learn program who helps you find child care, transportation to school, health care for you and your children, educational programs, and things like that" but "not an

AFDC eligibility worker.” Further investigation is required to determine the extent to which teens are self-referring to AFLP/Cal-Learn case management, are getting professional case management from another source, or are defining a helpful adult as a “case manager.”

Many of the school programs for pregnant and parenting teens offer some form of case management services, however, the intensity of these services varies greatly. At some schools teachers merely make suggestions to students, while at others there are formalized counseling and case management services, sometimes provided by AFLP agencies. School-based health clinics such as those provided by Healthy Start programs located at some schools seem to provide comprehensive services, including case management services similar to those available through Cal-Learn. However, these programs are quite rare and generally available only to teens who attend school. Teens who have dropped out have far fewer opportunities to avail themselves of case management services. They could, however, obtain case management through agencies such as local health and mental health clinics, Child Protective Services, or Probation Departments.

We found some differences among the four research counties with respect to the characteristics and qualifications of case management staff. The AFLP agencies in San Joaquin and San Bernardino Counties were operated by County Health Departments, and at the start of Cal-Learn these agencies tended to put relatively greater emphasis on health consequences of their interventions. Such an emphasis was consistent with the agencies’ origin as a health department project staffed by registered nurses. By 1997, the emphasis on hiring nurses and Master’s-level staff diminished as B.A.-level staff and those with experience serving teens (including AFDC eligibility workers) were hired for Cal-Learn case management positions. The case managers in these two counties also hired their staff from established civil service lists, and we found that they tended to be somewhat older and more experienced than their counterparts in Alameda and Los Angeles counties.

In contrast to San Bernardino and San Joaquin, the AFLPs in Alameda and Los Angeles counties are all private, not-for-profit agencies. We found that the case management staff in these two counties tended to be relatively younger and inexperienced, and that they were more likely to hold degrees in psychology or social work than in nursing. The case managers in these two counties were also more likely to have come from similar backgrounds to their clients’, and they tended to be ethnically matched to their clients. While further contrasts might be drawn between the counties and their case management practices, a fair comparison would require more in-depth investigation than we were able to undertake.

In 1997, we found that Cal-Learn case managers generally have positive attitudes about the Cal-Learn program despite their concerns about too much paperwork, too many clients, and not enough time to do everything that they need to do. Indeed, we heard many success stories. The following quote by a Cal-Learn case manager describes what we found as fairly typical of client and case manager attitudes towards the program:

Most of them see it as a positive program, and I find a lot of girls are now asking for their friends: “well my friend is pregnant, she wants to be on the Cal-Learn program”... they like the services they get. Really, I think it’s very helpful to them, with the transportation



help, you know bus passes, and child care. And then there were services we provided before for our AFLP clients that they like, which is basically having somebody they can rely on that's in their corner and can kind of help them through some of the many crises they face.

## VII. SCHOOLS

The Cal-Learn program is designed to operate best when a Cal-Learn client is enrolled in a school that provides progress reports on a regular basis; evaluates students using letter grades; and has staff who are willing to furnish enrollment data to county welfare departments and report card schedules to AFLPs. Moreover, there is an underlying assumption that if a teen has dropped out of school, he or she can re-enroll and succeed academically without compensatory support.

These conditions and assumptions are not matched by what we found in the field. As we discuss below, many schools struggle to serve pregnant and parenting students because these students have complex educational and psychosocial needs. Many Cal-Learn teens have dropped out of school at some point and face problems when they try to re-enroll in comprehensive schools. Some of these teens end up in alternative programs, many of which do not offer the academic and support services they need. Few alternative programs are considered academically rigorous.

Relationships between schools and AFLP agencies vary, and this effects the ease with which case managers can get the information they need to fulfill the requirements of Cal-Learn. Problems in this area can impede the tracking of progress towards Cal-Learn's educational goals for clients.

The California Department of Education describes similar problems in reports published in 1996 and 1997.<sup>16</sup> One example of the numerous challenges faced by educators in serving pregnant and parenting students is the lack of a safe, nurturing environment in many schools. Also, there are limited tutorial services available to students who are working below grade level and are behind in academic credit. The CDE argues that annual assessments of students to determine their academic and services needs is an essential component of any effort to improve the academic competence of these students. However, comprehensive assessments of pregnant and parenting teens are rarely performed in practice. They further point out that there is a lack of funding for expanding school programs and services for pregnant students and teen parents. The number of students eligible to participate in either the Pregnant Minor Program or the School Age Parenting and Infant Development (SAPID) program exceeds the existing capacity to serve them. Finally, the CDE notes that while the Cal-Learn program identifies educational achievement and high school graduation as a program goal, in many communities schools have not been an active partner in the planning and implementation of this program.

The data presented here were gathered during visits to schools in all four evaluation counties. We used purposive sampling to select schools—a technique designed to guarantee variety, although not necessarily representativeness. We stratified schools and programs serving a concentration of case-managed Cal-Learn clients to describe the range of programs teens attend (see Appendix G). Lacking information on the programs attended by non-case-managed teens, we assumed that random assignment ensured equal opportunity for teens in any research condition to attend the available school programs. Thus, we assumed there was no bias in the types of programs attended by case-managed and non-case-managed teens. Interviews with key informants and document reviews were carried out in comprehensive high schools, alternative schools, adult schools, pregnant minor programs, GED preparation programs and independent

studies programs. We also talked with AFLP and GAIN staff regarding their opinions about and experience with the schools their clients attend.

### **Schools Cal-Learn Teens Attend**

We found that Cal-Learn teens, like all pregnant and parenting students, attend a broad assortment of school programs. In addition to comprehensive high schools, many are enrolled in alternative programs. These programs include adult education, which generally serves students over 18; continuation schools designed for working teens but expanded to serve students needing less in-class time (15 hours per week rather than 30+); and pregnant minor programs, which are special programs for pregnant students under age 18. Many teen parents also avail themselves of alternative programs operating within comprehensive schools. For example, independent studies programs have students complete schoolwork under contracts. Generally these require students to meet with a teacher for one to two hours each week, and complete ten hours or so of homework per week.

Case managers and school staff reported that many of the Cal-Learn teens were school dropouts before they became pregnant, and that many clients had low academic skills. This is consistent with published data showing that one-third of adolescents who became mothers had dropped out of school first; and that unsuccessful students with low educational aspirations are more likely to become teen mothers than high achievers.<sup>17</sup> Half of the teen survey respondents in the present study reported having dropped out of school at some time for at least two months. Of those who did, about half attributed their dropping out either to pregnancy or child care responsibilities; and about half attributed their dropping out to some other reason.

Because of their low achievement and lack of course credits, many of the Cal-Learn teens were unable to enroll in comprehensive schools. Counselors and administrators in several programs across the counties told us that if a teen was so far behind in units that they would not be able to graduate on time (by age 18) from a traditional program, they would automatically be steered into an alternative, adult, or independent studies program. This strategy was applied so that teens could earn credits faster, or earn a GED if it looked like the teen had no chance of completing a high school diploma in any program. Case managers believed that some schools were reluctant to enroll teen parents based upon concern that such students would not attend school regularly, thus reducing state reimbursement to schools for daily student attendance.

We heard many tales of pregnant teens being pressured to leave comprehensive schools and even, in one instance in Los Angeles County, a continuation program. Case managers and school district administrators told us that some school principals feared that allowing pregnant teens to attend school would somehow encourage other teens to have children. Counselors in one Alameda County high school claimed that pregnant students were not safe in regular high schools because students are rough in the hallways, and that these teens would be treated better in the pregnant minor programs. A teacher described what a pregnant minor task force in which she participated discovered when they examined the problem of pregnant teens being pushed out of schools. According to her, some teachers and principals in comprehensive schools told pregnant students that they “couldn’t walk across the stage” at graduation ceremonies. Another principal told a pregnant student that “this junior high school doesn’t have pregnant women; you’re out of here, you go to a pregnant minor school.” Our informant commented that these

actions violated the students' rights under Title IX, a federal statute which guarantees equal educational opportunity for pregnant and parenting students.

Case managers complained that schools did not want to enroll teen parents who had been out of school for a while. In San Joaquin County, one case manager commented on this:

It's like they really are trying to keep them out [of school]. We have had such horror shows about how hard it is to get into school. They're just so rude and they treat them so badly. I think that they think that they're throw away kids; that they won't be good philosophy is to make it as difficult as possible on them.

A teacher in an alternative program had a similar view: "They don't want the kids back in the comprehensive high schools. These are the troublemakers...some of these girls will tell you they've been to every school in [the city]...they don't have a choice to go back."

Many educators expressed the belief that teens who were successful before getting pregnant continued to succeed in school, and many of these students stayed in their comprehensive high schools. In contrast, those students who had dropped out already, or who weren't doing well when they became pregnant were steered into the less academically focused alternative programs.

Many of the Cal-Learn teens are in alternative school programs. In Los Angeles County, a multi-site independent studies program had the largest single school enrollment of case-managed teens. In fact, pregnant teens and teen parents have a wider variety of school programs to choose from than most secondary school students. While most teens are not eligible to attend adult school, teen parents generally are exempt from the minimum age requirement. Although adult schools serve only students aged 18 and over, any pregnant or parenting teen can attend with the permission of the program counselor. Likewise, students under 17 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> generally are not allowed into the GED programs, but teen parents under 18 can attend with counselor approval.

Services available to teen parents vary among schools and districts. While all of the districts we visited had special programs for pregnant minors, there are some districts in the research counties that do not provide these programs. Moreover, while some of the programs were able to accommodate all students who applied, others had a limited number of slots. Case managers told us that teen parents tend to opt for programs with on-site or nearby child care. However, in the counties studied, these programs are often not located where teens wish to attend school. In particular, in Los Angeles County there is an insufficient supply of these programs. Almost all programs cited in our interviews had long waiting lists, and in the largest school district in the state, Los Angeles Unified School District, only eight high schools provide on-site care.

Teens often have to choose between an academically rigorous program or one that offers support services because only a few programs provide both. In the districts we visited, few comprehensive high schools have parenting classes or on-site child care, while alternative education programs with support services for teen parents were described as not being academically rigorous. Because many Cal-Learn teens have dropped out of school at some

point, they are in need of additional academic support. Yet, case managers and school counselors often steer these teens towards programs that provide the least support in this area. Instead of attending schools with extra tutoring or special programs to help catch them up with their peers, many Cal-Learn clients are in programs that provide individualized, “unit” learning at a basic skills level. There did not seem to be many programs designed to help low-achieving teen parents overcome their educational barriers.

### **Staff Opinions About School Programs**

Educators shared with us their opinions about the programs serving Cal-Learn teens. Almost all agreed that teen parents needed access to parenting education and other specialized services, whether or not their own programs provided these. At the same time, there was a lot of concern expressed about the quality of the academic offerings in the alternative education programs that provide these services or offer flexible scheduling in order to accommodate teen parents’ needs.

There was a broad range of opinions about the specialized programs for pregnant minors and other programs available to pregnant and parenting teens.<sup>18</sup> While some high school counselors and pregnant minor program teachers told us that these specialized programs were the best option for pregnant teens because of the parenting/life skills classes, “nurturing” and other special support services, others felt that students in these programs would fall behind in coursework and not get the academic support they needed. An instructor in a special program for parenting teens, which was part of a dropout recovery and adult school program, expressed this concern:

The problem we have is that if a kid wants to be an academic success, you know, wants to have a quality high school diploma, really wants to go to college, they should not come to programs like this. I mean it breaks my heart to have to say that but I believe that, you know...we don’t really have any of the sciences, we don’t really have the arts...the high school diploma they get here, it’s a rushed, minimal...I mean, you can come out of here barely able to write, and you know we’ve got kids now in college who are really struggling, who left here assuming that they got a high school diploma that would allow them to go to college and are up against the wall because they don’t have the skills needed to be successful in college...and the terrible thing is the way they get hooked up in the pregnant minor schools, you know, they feel they have to go to pregnant minor schools. I’ve got nothing against pregnant minor schools except it’s a tracking system. And it is a tracking system for teen mothers no matter how you look at it. Yes, they do get information about child birth and so on, which is good. But you know it can really make it very hard to be academically where...or to have the career they want. The truth is, graduating from this program, from the pregnant minor programs, they’re not equipped.

She later told us that only a couple of students manage to graduate from their program each year, and added that: “The education here, cut and dried, is abominable...what we are doing is perpetuating why they dropped out...I think it’s a complete and utter disgrace.”

One teacher in a pregnant minor program called her curriculum “academically low-pressure,” and case managers from the same county expressed concern that the academic standards were lax in

the county's alternative "community" schools. Still, despite concerns about the academic quality of the alternative education programs, case managers felt that these options were needed and valuable. One told us, "I like community school because if they've been out of school a while it's something to get them back into things, but they don't really learn anything. They get a lot of easy credits, but it doesn't really prepare them for any future education...They get credit for going to a movie and then writing a report." She felt that students need independent studies as an option, and "Some of [the independent studies programs] really make [students] work."

Some programs do combine academic rigor with support services for teen parents. One alternative school in Los Angeles County offers a program in which teen parents attend regular academic courses with other students, but they also take classes in parenting and life skills. This school provides on-site child care, and teen parents are required to work in the nursery one day each week. A comprehensive high school we visited in Los Angeles County has a Healthy Start program that includes a health clinic as well as space for AFLP case managers and Medi-Cal counselors to work on site. In addition, the school has a SAPID program, although there is a long waiting list for the child care slots. The teen parents attend classes with regular students, but all of the SAPID participants shared a common homeroom. All of the students in this school have access to quality, comprehensive health care, including reproductive health care services.

In San Bernardino County, one comprehensive high school that offers no special services for teen parents instead has two counselors who run support groups for the teen parents. These counselors themselves had been teen parents, and have created an atmosphere of support for the pregnant and parenting teens on their campus. They focus on educating teachers about the teens in addition to guiding teen parents through the challenges they face.

Despite the variety of opinions about the quality and desirability of the schools and programs serving teen parents, most Cal-Learn teens in the survey sample said they like school. Only about one in five of respondents said they do not like school.

### **Interactions Between Schools and the Cal-Learn Program**

The Cal-Learn program places demands on school staff over and above their responsibility for educating the students. School personnel have been asked to complete additional paperwork to verify enrollment and attendance for GAIN and AFDC, and they are asked to fill out AFLP-developed report card forms if their programs do not provide standard report cards. The Cal-Learn program does not reimburse schools for this additional work. However, some school staff do recognize a benefit from the program when AFLP case managers return school dropouts, and then provide students with services to help them succeed. In one program for pregnant teens and teen parents, students are screened for Medi-Cal and food stamps. If they are on AFDC, but not in Cal-Learn, the teacher will hand out a brochure for the local AFLP agency, and encourage the teens to call for case management. She said, "What I tell them is, eventually you're gonna be notified anyway, and you have to be a part of this program, so get on it now and get the benefits now." Case managers utilize the school staff as well. A teacher told us, "They call me. For example, if they can't get a hold of the student at home, the number has changed, I'll get the student on my phone and we'll call and connect that way, because I know how important it is that they connect with them. And they'll call. If they have concerns, or if I have concerns, I'll call. So it's a real good working relationship."

Relationships between schools and AFLPs vary considerably, even within districts. In general, prior to the implementation of Cal-Learn, AFLPs had close working relationships with few schools. With Cal-Learn, they expanded their service areas, and had to work with many new districts and schools. These new relationships were at first difficult and frustrating; case managers reported dealing with a lot of mistrust and hostility. But over time, many have developed good relationships. In the counties studied, there are alternative schools where case managers run support groups for pregnant or parenting teens, often serving teens who are not in Cal-Learn as well as their own clients. Some teachers and administrators reported that they call case managers for support to keep teens in schools. Often, case managers have cultivated relationships with individual school personnel, e.g., teachers, counselors or school secretaries, rather than relying on interagency arrangements between AFLP agencies and schools or districts. Still, there are programs that are unwilling to cooperate with the case managers when they bring in teens to enroll or request information about their clients. Often, if school staff are unfamiliar with Cal-Learn, they do not feel comfortable working with a case manager who is acting in a role that is legally restricted to a parent or legal guardian.

Familiarity with the Cal-Learn program varies widely among school staff between and within schools. While there have been widespread efforts to inform school staff about Cal-Learn, many remain unfamiliar with the program. For example, when we called to schedule an interview at an alternative high school serving a number of Cal-Learn teens, the principal had not heard of Cal-Learn, despite an AFLP being located within a few blocks of his school. In several cases, school personnel had heard of Cal-Learn but did not know what the program did. After our formal interviews were over, some school staff asked UC DATA researchers to explain the program. In a comprehensive high school that housed a program for pregnant teens, the head counselor knew little about Cal-Learn or about what happened to teens referred into the pregnant teen program. However, a counselor for “at-risk” students in the same school knew more about Cal-Learn, although she too did not track the progress of pregnant teens after they enrolled in the separate program. The teacher in that teen parent program refused to speak with us altogether, citing a complete lack of knowledge about Cal-Learn.

Some educators have been involved with AFLP agencies and teen parent support networks since before the start of Cal-Learn, while others only learned about the program when students requested progress reports or attendance verification to receive supportive services and financial incentives. In many cases, even if they had heard about Cal-Learn, teachers did not understand how the program operated until they spoke with UC DATA researchers. Different districts and counties took different tacts to inform schools about the Cal-Learn program. In Los Angeles Unified, the Teen Parent Programs coordinator holds meetings with persons designated as “teen parent advocates” in all of the secondary schools. Letters are also sent to all secondary school principals by the Los Angeles County Welfare Department. In all four counties, GAIN Cal-Learn coordinators made outreach efforts at a minimum to county education departments and their GAIN advisory councils. However, the degree to which their efforts informed or filtered down to schools varied.

School staff for the most part do not know which students are in Cal-Learn unless the teens explicitly tell them that they are in the program, or request enrollment and attendance verification

or report cards for Cal-Learn purposes. Moreover, because some counties allow teens to self-report their attendance, and many schools issue regular report cards without special requests, some teens can fulfill their Cal-Learn educational obligations without notifying school personnel of their status. Still, there are programs, in particular those for pregnant teens or teen parents, that ask teens directly if they are on any kind of public aid, and if they are in Cal-Learn. School staff who are familiar with Cal-Learn, and have good working relationships with the AFLPs, will ask teens to tell them who their case managers are, so that they can work with them. Some expressed interest in knowing who all of the Cal-Learn teens were, so that they could utilize the case managers and other aspects of the program as support for their educational efforts. As one teacher told us, “From my point of view, Cal-Learn’s supposed to help me. I don’t live to help them, they live to help me. And so [case managers say] we need this, we need that. Excuse me, [case managers] exist to help the schools...because we can call [them] and say help us. I’m not

This same teacher thought the Cal-Learn case managers should be more active in her school, and she complained that there was too much AFLP staff turnover and not enough attention to her program. However, she did feel that at times the AFLP staff really helped her. She noted, “How it works is, there will be a case worker that I get to know who I call, right there that girl right there (points) I have trouble with her, I call her caseworker, I say [she’s] not coming to school. She (the case manager) calls her (the student), she does a home visit. That’s the way it’s supposed to be. It’s supposed to be that they’re supposed to help us. And so, now this particular Cal-Learn worker, she’s great! She’s goes to her home, she teaches her how to parent, I mean this kid needs all the help she can get. And she gets it. And so she has in fact gotten better as a student...” The above illustrates that relationships with school staff depend on the individual case managers. While some case managers are more involved in the schools than others, as a rule there is very little communication between case managers and teachers.



## VIII. CONCLUSION

The Cal-Learn program is an ambitious program designed to attack long-term welfare receipt and dependency by encouraging and assisting teen parents on welfare to stay in or return to school, and to graduate. It was a complex program to implement, but three years after the start, much has been accomplished. County agencies, community-based organizations, and schools have demonstrated that they can work together to provide a comprehensive range of services to pregnant and parenting teens. Despite the many challenges discussed in this report, many more teen parents on welfare in California now have access to the services of a case manager who is knowledgeable about their needs and concerns and who can counsel and assist them to obtain needed services. Cal-Learn teens also have a guarantee of funding for their transportation and child care needs while attending school. Finally, there are now financial incentives to encourage teens to make satisfactory progress in school, and to graduate or earn a GED while in the program.

Welfare reform, currently underway both nationally and in California, leaves the future of Cal-Learn quite uncertain. The federal waivers under which the program now operates allow it to continue as is through March 1999. The state, however, may opt to end these waivers early, and counties have the option of proposing alternative teen parent program plans under CalWORKs, the California welfare reform law. The advantage, or disadvantage depending on one's point of view, to continuing the federal waivers are that they allow teens in Cal-Learn to be exempt from certain provisions in TANF, the federal welfare law. For example, teens not attending school are sanctioned \$100 four times a year under current Cal-Learn rules, whereas without the waivers they would lose their eligibility for aid altogether. Policymakers at the state and county level have many decisions to make about the Cal-Learn program. Our analysis of the challenges in operating Cal-Learn suggests certain lessons policymakers may want to consider when deciding the future of teen parent programs.

- **The Cal-Learn experience suggests that program operations would benefit from better integration of the roles of different departments within county welfare offices and between county welfare and case management agencies.**

Coordination among the AFDC, GAIN and AFLP programs was one of the more challenging aspects of Cal-Learn implementation. Coordination problems were manifested in difficulties with identifying and referring eligible teens to the program, delays in the receipt of supportive services, and delays in imposing sanctions. As separate programs situated in different locations and with substantially different missions, it was not easy to maintain good coordination. Separate and disconnected computer systems only added to the interagency communication problems. The fact that Cal-Learn clients were a special population within GAIN and AFDC, comprising only a small portion of the caseload in either program made it easy to overlook these clients, for Cal-Learn to be assigned a low priority, and for communication problems to ensue.

Under welfare reform counties are required to integrate the functions of their income maintenance and employment services programs for *all* clients, and there is a substantial role for the contracting out of services to community agencies. Counties are now developing procedures

for moving clients quickly and concurrently through intake and work preparation programs and services. If policymakers continue to see teen parents without a diploma as a special population in need of Cal-Learn services, then counties will need to devote greater attention during their intake and assessment processes towards identifying Cal-Learn eligible teens. There is evidence that teen parents, because they represent such a small portion of the welfare caseload, could easily get lost in the shuffle of the enormous changes occurring in county welfare offices. This may result in their being diverted into job search activities instead of receiving the intensive case management and educational services which they are entitled to under the law, and which may be more appropriate for their circumstances.

- **Streamlining the process for getting child care and supportive services approved and reimbursed may encourage more Cal-Learn teens to utilize and benefit from these subsidies.**

Complicated application and reimbursement procedures for obtaining child care and other supportive services have contributed to their low utilization by Cal-Learn teens. Teens often have difficulty properly filling out the necessary forms, and case managers often complain about completing this additional paperwork. Some counties have facilitated the disbursement of funds for transportation and ancillary services by allowing AFLP staff to certify needs and actually distribute bus passes or tokens.

Child care providers can be discouraged from participating in the Cal-Learn program because the program pays for child care on a per hour or per diem basis, leaving providers at risk if teens have irregular attendance. Many child care funding streams underwrite a designated number of child care slots over a one year period, which allows for stable funding, and greater flexibility. Selecting high quality child care providers and allocating Cal-Learn slots within their programs could attract teens to better facilities and help alleviate much of the administrative burden on clients and their case managers. Some counties have already facilitated the child care reimbursement process by allowing case managers to certify teens' attendance in school, rather than requiring official school attendance records. The most sought after child care providers, and therefore those with the longest waiting lists, are often those located at or near schools. Current rules, however, make it more difficult for school funded child care facilities to receive Cal-Learn reimbursement. Access to quality child care would be improved for Cal-Learn teens if school-based child care centers could be reimbursed without the additional hurdle of first demonstrating that they have exhausted all other existing sources of child care funding.

- **Programs like Cal-Learn should identify meaningful fiscal incentives, begin them soon after enrollment, and tie them more closely in time to actual school performance.**

The effectiveness of Cal-Learn rests in part on the soundness of the program's conceptual framework. Whereas reinforcement may be a necessary condition for behavior change, learning theorists long ago recognized that behavior change is more likely the greater the quantity and quality of the reinforcer, and the more immediate the reinforcement following behavior. County

welfare department, AFLP, and school staff interviewed for this report raised a number of questions about the assumptions underlying Cal-Learn bonuses and sanctions. These include questions about whether they are appropriate, necessary, high enough in value, and timely enough to be truly effective as motivators. Some think that offering bonuses to pregnant and parenting teens is wrong for ethical reasons. Others say that bonuses are unnecessary because many teens will attend school and do well whether or not they are rewarded. Still others question whether \$100 is a sufficient incentive to encourage teens to succeed in school, especially when nested teens do not directly receive the money. For some, imposing sanctions only appears to drive poor students further away from the help they need. Finally, the time between when a teen enters the program and when they eventually get their bonus or sanction sometimes is so delayed that its reinforcing value is considerably weakened.

- **If intensive case management is to help Cal-Learn teens with the array of problems they face as teen parents, then strengthening the ability of AFLP agencies to serve Cal-Learn clients may be needed.**

By basing the Cal-Learn case management model on the AFLP program, legislators recognized the value of the AFLP model for serving teen parents. However, the Cal-Learn program placed additional responsibilities on case managers without reducing their client caseloads. Under their Cal-Learn contracts, AFLPs were assigned new responsibilities for coordinating with the schools, collecting student report cards, and recommending bonuses and sanctions. They also helped teens fill out GAIN child care and other supportive service applications and monthly expense reports. In addition, because they were assigned non-voluntary clients, they spent much more time trying to track down and meet with resistant teens.

In order to allow case managers to meet the AFLP standards of practice and fulfill their many additional obligations under Cal-Learn, additional resources may be needed to either reduce case manager caseloads, or to hire additional administrative support staff. In some counties, such as San Bernardino, Health Service Assistants are employed to perform some of the clerical case management tasks, leaving case managers more time to spend on their clinical duties.

It is also important to recognize that there are limits to what case management can accomplish in the context of Cal-Learn. While the offer of intensive case management is a core component of the Cal-Learn program, in reality this is an offer some clients refuse to accept. Generally, Cal-Learn case managers explain the program to teens, undertake a comprehensive assessment of their needs, refer teens to needed services, and make a special effort to form a caring and sympathetic relationship. Cal-Learn case managers can do an excellent job of assessing the multiple needs of teen parents, and they can provide them with advocacy and referral services. If a teen is unwilling or unable to accept help, however, there is not much that a case manager can do except to keep trying. As the literature on teenage childbearing points out, teen parents as a group are disproportionately exposed to a wide variety of psychosocial risk factors.<sup>19</sup> The severe disadvantages that strain the day to day lives of many Cal-Learn teens—poverty, violent and unsafe neighborhoods, inadequate educational resources, and difficult home lives—can not easily be remedied through the interventions of a case manager alone. Individual work by case managers with clients and their families is considered most effective when it goes hand in hand

with broader improvements in the living conditions and opportunities available to teens. These are complex social problems that are beyond the scope of the Cal-Learn program.

- **Improving the links between schools and Cal-Learn agencies, and enhancing the ability of schools to meet the needs of pregnant and parenting teens may improve educational outcomes for teen parents on welfare.**

There are two major areas in which the role of schools in the Cal-Learn program can be strengthened. One area is the connection between the case managers and the schools; the other is the services provided by schools to pregnant teens and teen parents. Schools were not given a formal role in the Cal-Learn program even though they have a responsibility to educate pregnant and parenting teens. A mutually supportive collaboration between Cal-Learn and the schools may depend in part on school staff participating more actively in the Cal-Learn program, whether through formal arrangements with agencies or informal relationships. This depends on school staff being fully informed about the program and open to working with outside organizations. The Cal-Learn program offers an opportunity to integrate academic and psychosocial support services for pregnant and parenting teens in school by means of the closer cooperation of schools and case managers. Where teachers see the case managers as allies, they will ask case managers for support in locating absent students or accessing needed social services.

Finally, schools may need additional support to meet the needs of teen parents. Many school programs do not take a comprehensive approach towards teen parents. Most of the alternative programs we visited lack the resources to assess teens for learning disabilities or to provide specialized academic services to students in need of remediation. Many traditional school programs, while offering academically rigorous classes, do not offer services aimed at supporting teen parents (e.g., on-site child care, parenting classes or flexible schedules). Nor do they emphasize skills that prepare students to compete in the job market and succeed in the workplace. Additional financial resources aimed at providing educational assessment, remedial tutoring and supportive services to teen parents across educational programs may be necessary. The California Department of Education recognized this, and supported legislation introduced in 1997 (Senate Bill 1064) to create a new program, Cal-SAFE, which would combine several programs for pregnant and parenting students and enhance the level of funding and services available. As of Spring 1998, this legislation was pending action that is expected after the budget passes this summer.

## **APPENDIXES**

## Appendix A: Overview of the Cal-Learn Program<sup>1</sup>

- County welfare departments are required to implement the Cal-Learn Program for all pregnant and custodial teen parents under age 19, and receiving AFDC.
- The teen parent participates in Cal-Learn until a high school diploma or its equivalent is obtained or turns 19 years old.<sup>2</sup>
- Supportive services necessary to enable the Cal-Learn participant to attend school regularly will be provided. These services include child care, transportation, and ancillary services.
- Teen parents may be exempted or deferred from the Cal-Learn Program only under specific circumstances, such as the unavailability of necessary services or a special need which affects school performance and which cannot be addressed. Cal-Learn deferrals are time-limited and the teen parent will continue to receive case management services during the deferral period.
- Exemption or deferral from Cal-Learn does not mean that the teen is exempt from attending school. All teens must attend school as required by Section 48200 of the California Education Code.
- All teens in Cal-Learn will receive case management services to assist the teen not only in obtaining their educational goals, but to address health issues for the teen and infant, parenting skills, and the safety and family issues involving the teen.
- Cal-Learn case management services must either be provided by Adolescent Family Life Program (AFLP) providers, or the services must conform to the standards of the Adolescent Family Life Program. Counties are required to contract for case management services with agencies that administer Adolescent Family Life Programs, unless AFLP is unavailable, not cost-effective or the county has an existing program and certain conditions are met.
- Counties providing non-AFLP case management services were required to submit additional information in their county plan which will be reviewed and approved by the Department of Health Services.
- Bonuses and sanctions are based on report cards and high school graduation. The bonus/sanction is limited to four times per year.
- A \$100 bonus is provided to the family if the participant maintains satisfactory progress. Satisfactory progress is defined as a grade point average of at least 2.0 (a C average)
- A \$100 sanction results from a participant failing to demonstrate adequate progress, either by failing to provide the report card or based on the report card grades. Adequate progress is defined as a grade point average of at least 1.0 (a D average).
- The sanction is applied to the family's aid, not to exceed \$50 in a single month.
- Cal-Learn participants receive a \$500 bonus for high school graduation or equivalency. The \$500 bonus is paid to the teen parent.
- For participants in non-graded programs the bonuses and sanctions will be given based on the school's determination of adequate or satisfactory progress.
- After the teen parent graduates from high school or obtains the equivalency, or turns 19, they become mandatory participants in GAIN.

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<sup>1</sup>California Department of Social Services, AFLP/Cal-Learn Case Management Program Training packet, August 1994

<sup>2</sup>Beginning in January 1998, clients can *volunteer* to participate in the program until age 20. 1998 Cal-Learn Process Evaluation Report, page 38

## Appendix B: Teenage Childbearing in California<sup>3</sup>

- There were 64,603 births to teen mothers in California in 1996. This represents a teen birth rate of 58.6 per 1000 of population, and compares to a U.S. teen birth rate of 54.7.
- The teen birth rate in California has been declining since 1991. The 9% decline in the rate between 1995 and 1996 was the largest single year drop in 25 years. In the Cal-Learn demonstration counties there were 1,654 fewer births to teens in Los Angeles in 1996 than 1995, 169 fewer in San Bernardino, 161 fewer in Alameda, and 126 fewer in San Joaquin.
- Teen mothers in California are comprised primarily of Hispanics (63%), with Whites constituting 21%, African Americans 11% and Asians 4% of teen births in 1996.
- Most births to teens are to older teens. Sixty percent of all teen births are to 18 and 19 year olds. Seventeen year olds comprise 19%, 16 year olds 13%, 15 year olds 6%, and teen 14 and younger 2% of teen births in 1996.
- Teen mothers in California are disproportionately low income. Of the teen parents who delivered in California in 1996, 74% had assets and income low enough to qualify for Medi-Cal.

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<sup>3</sup> *1996 Atlas of Teen Birth Rates*, California Department of Health Services, Sacramento, CA  
1998 Cal-Learn Process Evaluation Report, page 39

## Appendix C: AFLP Standards of Practice<sup>4</sup>

1. The AFLP provider (the provider) fulfills administrative and management functions necessary to achieve the Mission and Goals of the AFLP and to meet the contractual requirements of the State Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Branch/AFLP.
2. AFLP provider agencies participate in network coordination in their communities for the provision of services to pregnant and parenting adolescents, their children, and their families.
3. The AFLP provider conducts outreach and case finding activities to identify adolescent women under 18 years of age who are pregnant or who have one or more children. The men who are their partners in pregnancy and parenting are recruited for the program so long as they are under 21 years of age.
4. The AFLP provider has a structured, interactive process to enroll clients into the program.
5. The AFLP case manager systematically collects, records, and analyzes client information to serve as a baseline for the development of the initial comprehensive Individual Service Plan (ISP).
6. The AFLP client will have an ISP developed after the initial assessment period, and that the ISP will be reviewed at least quarterly, and revised as needed.
7. The AFLP case manager, guided by the ISP, facilitates client access to and utilization of available public and public services.
8. Each client's progress is monitored on a monthly basis through client, collateral, and/or service provider contacts to determine the effectiveness of the service delivery and to assess progress toward individual goals and objectives.

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<sup>4</sup>Source: *California Department of Health Services, Maternal and Child Health Standards* (1994). Each of the above standards also has explicit criteria for evaluation of agency compliance.  
1998 Cal-Learn Process Evaluation Report, page 40



## Appendix D: Description of the Evaluation Counties<sup>5</sup>

**Alameda County** is located in Northern California. It contains densely populated urban areas as well as suburban and rural areas. The population of almost 1.4 million is very diverse, ethnically and economically, and there are great wealth disparities in the county. The largest city, Oakland, is composed of at least 82 different language and/or ethnic groups, according to the 1990 census. In 1996, 36% of the children were in low-income families. The teen birth rate in 1996 among 15-19 year olds was 44.8 per 1000, and the total number of births to this age group was 1,830. The total population on welfare in July 1996 was 98,546; this number has been dropping steadily and in November 1997 stood at 83,960. The total Cal-Learn population in July 1996 was 830, and dropped to 564 in November 1997.

**Los Angeles County** is located in Southern California. It is the largest county population-wise not only in the state but also in the nation--over 9.6 million residents. Los Angeles encompasses densely populated urban areas, large suburban areas, and part of the sparsely populated Antelope Valley. The county is ethnically and economically diverse. 59% of the county's children live in low-income families. The teen birth rate among 15 to 19 year olds in 1996 was 68.3 per 1000, and there were a total of 19,958 births in this group. The total population on welfare in July 1996 was 866,933, and it dropped to 751,090 by November, 1997. The Cal-Learn population in July 1996 numbered 8,263; this figure has declined steeply and in November 1997 it was 4,641.

**San Bernardino County** is also located in Southern California. The population of almost 1.8 million residents is spread across the largest county, area-wise, in the state and the nation. San Bernardino is largely rural with a couple of urban and suburban population centers. The population is majority white, but there is a large Latino population. 44% of the children in the county live in low-income families. The teen birth rate among 15 to 19 year olds was 66.9 per 1000 in 1996, and there were 4,316 babies born to teens. The county's total population on welfare in July 1996 was 182,802, and it declined to 153,436 by November 1997. The Cal-Learn population was 1,290 in July 1996; in November 1997 this figure dropped to 1,063.

**San Joaquin County** is located in the central part of California, in the San Joaquin Valley. The county is largely rural and agricultural with a couple of small urban centers. It is the smallest county in the demonstration project, both in terms of geographic size and population, with just over 560,000 residents. It is also a relatively poor county. Over half of the residents are White; Latinos make up the next largest group and the population of Southeast Asians is growing rapidly. 49% of the county's children live in low-income families. The teen birth rate among 15 to 19 year olds was 63.6 per 1000 in 1996, and the total number of births was 1,328. The total population on welfare in the county was 68,384 in July 1996; in November 1997 it had dropped to 57,811. The total Cal-Learn population in July 1996 was 577; in November 1997 it was 385.

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<sup>5</sup> Data drawn from *California County Data Book, 1997*, Children Now, Oakland, CA., and *1996 Atlas of Teen Birth Rates*, California Department of Health Services, Sacramento, CA, and *Monthly AFDC Caseload Movement Reports*, California Department of Social Services, Sacramento, CA..  
1998 Cal-Learn Process Evaluation Report, page 41

## **Appendix E: Terms and Conditions From Waiver for Process Study<sup>6</sup>**

The evaluation will include a process study that will describe how the parts of the program were implemented and operated. This study will examine the following aspects of the demonstration:

- The organizational aspects, such as, the planning process, staffing structure, funding committed, and procedures for verification;
- The contextual factors, such as, the social, economic, and political forces that may have a bearing on the replicability of the intervention or influence the implementation of the demonstration;
- The contextual factors which may have affected the observed impacts of the demonstrations and what those factors say about extrapolating the experience in California to the rest of the nation; and
- The differences between the demonstrations and the comparable services, activities, staffing, etc., available to those not participating in the demonstration.

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<sup>6</sup>Waiver Terms and Conditions, CWPDP, 1994, pp. 9-10.  
1998 Cal-Learn Process Evaluation Report, page 42

**Appendix F: Process Evaluation In-Person Interviews  
Number of Interviews by Year\* / Number of staff assigned to Cal-Learn\*\***

State level	1995	1996	1997
CDSS	5/5	2/5	2/5
CDHS	1/1	1/1	1/1
CDE	1/1	1/1	1/1
Total	5	4	4

County level	1995	1996	1997
Cal-Learn coord.	4/4	4/4	4/4
GAIN staff	7/23	13/28	11/27
AFDC adm.	4/4	4/4	4/4
AFDC elig.	4**	4**	4**
AFLP adm.	9/9	9/9	9/9
AFLP case mgr.	36/≈137	18/≈239	18/≈184
AFLP data entry	0	9/20	14/17
Total	64	61	64

Schools	1995	1996	1997
Comprehensive	1	4	5
Continuation	1	2	5
Ind. Studies/ GED/Adult Ed.	1	1	8
Pregnant Minor	8	8	9
Total	11	15	27

<b>Grand total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>95</b>
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\* In addition to the in-person interviews, less formal interviews were often conducted by telephone, & information was often obtained through contact at planning and research meetings with state and county program staff.

\*\* The numbers provided in the denominator refer to the number of staff specifically assigned Cal-Learn responsibilities within agencies. Some CDSS staff have full-time Cal-Learn responsibilities, but CDHS and CDE staff

do *not*. No denominator is provided for AFDC eligibility staff since *all* EWs have certain Cal-Learn responsibilities. No denominator is provided for schools since they have no explicit Cal-Learn responsibilities.

## **Appendix G: Educational Programs and Strategies Available to Pregnant and Parenting Students<sup>7</sup>**

### **Adult Education**

Adult education programs provide day and evening classes for adults 18 and older including Basic Skills, ESL, GED and high school diploma preparation, business and vocational skills, and a variety of self-improvement courses. Some also provide parent education classes, including parent cooperative preschool programs, and instruction in child development and child care services. Minor pregnant and parenting students may be concurrently enrolled in K-12 and adult education or enrolled with adult status. (Education Code section 52610.5)

### **Continuation Education**

Continuation Education is a mandated program designed to meet California's part-time compulsory education requirement for 16-18 year old students. The minimum attendance requirement for this age group is 15 hours a week for a part-time or unemployed minors, and 4 hours a week for those with full-time employment (over 30 hours a week). High school graduation requirements are established by the local governing board with most continuation schools providing comparable curriculum options to those offered at the comprehensive schools. (Education Code Sections 48400-48454, supplemented by the California Administrative Code Title 5, Sections 11000-11010)

### **County Pregnant Minor Program (PMP)**

Seventeen county offices of education (including San Bernardino, Alameda and Los Angeles) operate a Pregnant Minor Program in approximately 100 school sites. Pregnant students who have not graduated from high school may voluntarily participate in the program but must have written pregnancy verification. The program provides an academic program with supportive services to students who attend class a minimum of four hours daily. The PMP may be a self-contained classroom or be interfaced with independent study or the continuation education program. With approval from the local planning committee students may continue in the PMP for one semester following the semester in which they deliver. (Education Code Sections 2551.3, 8900-8902)

### **Court and Community Schools**

County Boards of Education may establish and maintain community schools to serve a) students who have been expelled from a school while attending continuing classes, opportunity classes, or alternative classes; b) students referred by a school district at the recommendation of a school attendance review board, or students whose school district of attendance has at the request of the student's parent or guardian approved the student's enrollment in a community school; c) students who are probation referred or who are on probation or parole and are not in attendance in any school; or d) homeless children. Some counties (including San Joaquin) have established community school programs specifically for pregnant and parenting students. (Education Code Sections 1980-1985)

### **Independent Study**

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<sup>7</sup>Based on the *Educational Programs and Strategies Available to Pregnant and Parenting Students Fact Sheet*. California Department of Education, Teen Pregnancy/Parenting Programs, February 1994. 1998 Cal-Learn Process Evaluation Report, page 45

Independent Study is a school district option of instruction that provides for flexibility in scheduling study and allows students to choose different ways to acquire the values, skills and knowledge of education. Independent study may be part-time study connected with classroom instruction, or full-time work separate from traditional classroom instruction and must be covered by a written agreement pursuant to the school board's policies and procedures. Independent study students and their parent(s) if under 18, must sign an agreement with their supervising teacher each semester defining their course of study and the frequency, time and place that they will meet. Students generally meet with their independent studies teacher for one to two hours per week and complete 20 hours per week of homework, although individual agreements vary. (Education Code Sections 46300(3), 51745-51749.5, and California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Sections 11700-11703)

### **Opportunity Schools and Programs**

The major emphasis of Opportunity Education is to help the student develop a positive self-image, acquire sufficient learning skills for continued learning, and have a better understanding of what is needed to succeed. These programs and classes provide an environment with the specialized curriculum, climate, instruction and guidance services necessary to help at-risk students, grades one through twelve, stay in regular classes or return to regular school or classes as soon as practicable. (Education Code Sections 48630-48644.5)

### **School Age Parenting and Infant Development (SAPID) Program**

This program serves school age parents in grades 7-12 by supporting teens to remain in school through the provision of child care on or near the school site and transportation of the teen parents and their children to school and the child care center. It is also mandatory for teen parents to participate in a theory and practicum parenting education course which is designed to increase their positive parenting skills. (Education Code Sections 8390-8397)

## ENDNOTES

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1. CDSS Cal-Learn Program Staff presentation at Cal-Learn Work Group Meeting, August 8, 1997.
  2. *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996*. Public Law 104-193. 104th Cong., 2d sess., 22 August 1996, Section 408.
  3. Counties have the option of proposing alternative teen parent programs through the CalWORKs County Demonstration Project process. Assembly Bill (AB)1542 (Chapter 270, Statutes of 1997).
  4. *The Cal-Learn Program*. Fact Sheet. California Department of Social Services, 1994
  5. If AFLP services were unavailable, cost-ineffective, or the county had an existing teen services program which met MCH's AFLP Standards of Practice, CWDs were permitted to provide their own case management services. In each of the four research counties, however, the CWDs contracted out case management to the AFLP agencies that had already been operating for six to nine years prior to the start of Cal-Learn.
  6. While Cal-Learn and AFLP funding streams are different, for the purpose of this report the agencies providing Cal-Learn case management will be referred to as AFLPs, since all of the case management agencies in the research counties were previously providing AFLP-funded services and are commonly referred to as AFLPs.
  7. These numbers are preliminary figures from the county Cal-Learn coordinators and do not account for deletions and corrections which counties are continuing to make.
  8. Cunniff, J., Dillon, N., Hirshberg, D., Medlin, C., and Malvin, J. (1997). *Implementation of California's Cal-Learn Demonstration Project: A Process Evaluation*. Berkeley, CA: UC DATA. This report is available on the UC DATA web site, <http://ucdata.berkeley.edu>.
  9. In California, the teen birth rate declined 9.3% between 1991 and 1995. Child Trends, Inc. (1997). *Facts at a Glance*. Washington, DC: Author.
  10. Exemptions are allowed if: the minor has no parents or guardians living, their whereabouts are unknown, or the parent/guardian will not allow the teen to live in his/her home; if Child Protective Services (CPS) determines that the health or safety of the minor parent or his/her child is threatened in that home; if the teen parent has been apart from the parent or guardian for at least twelve months prior to the application for aid; or if the teen parent is legally emancipated. Teens falling under any of these categories are referred to Child Welfare Services (CWS) for assessment and services. All minor parents determined capable of living independently then are provided with Minor Parent Services (MPS). MPS are case management services based on a home visit model, and intended to address issues around infant health and development, parenting, and relevant life skills.

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11. Statistics cited from the Retrospective Survey are preliminary (n=885), and represent a sample heavily weighted with San Bernardino teens. Many of the surveyed teens, in fact, did not acknowledge ever being in Cal-Learn, and only teens who were aware that they were in or had been in Cal-Learn (about 65%) were questioned about their understanding of bonuses and sanctions.

12. When California first began reducing welfare benefits for AFDC recipients on 1992, a class action lawsuit was brought on behalf of disabled people on AFDC, *Beno v. Shalala, U.S.C.A. 9th*, No. 93-16411, which sought to block reductions in the “maximum aid payment” (MAP) levels for people with disabilities. In June 1996 the State of California implemented a settlement of the Beno suit via adoption of a two-tiered MAP system. Disabled or otherwise “exempt” cases had their benefits rolled back to the higher 1992 MAP levels. All other AFDC cases are considered “non-exempt” and these cases had their benefits further reduced. MAP exemption criteria apply to those affected by an incapacity or the inability to work, and also include teens under 19 who are enrolled in school, and unaided non-parent caretakers of aided children. To qualify for exempt status, all adult members on the AU have to meet one of the criteria. Thus, Cal-Learn teens who are the head of their AU are exempted if they are in school, but Cal-Learn teens nested in an AU and in school are exempted only if every adult member of the AU meets the exemption criteria.

13. Preliminary data from the Lodestar MIS system, presented by CDSS Cal-Learn Policy Unit staff to the Cal-Learn Work Group, August 1997.

14. Trust line procedures were implemented by counties during 1995, and required that child care vendors be fingerprinted and cleared through the Justice Department unless the child care provider is licensed or the grandparent aunt of uncle of the child.

15. The definition of case management, according to AFLP standards, is as follows: “A process which assures that a client receives needed services within a complex multi- and trans-disciplinary network in an efficient, supportive, and cost effective manner. Case management is client-centered, culturally appropriate, and goal-oriented. It is interactive, involving the client and the client’s family, significant others, and support persons as equal partners with the case manager in identifying needs and defining ways to meet those needs. Building interpersonal relationships among the clients, case managers, and others is both a method and goal of case management.” A case manager is defined as being “responsible for, but not limited to, assessing clients’ needs, problem solving, counseling, case monitoring, coordination, and evaluation, as well as client advocacy.” *Adolescent Family Life Program Standards (With Cal-Learn Addendum)*, California Department of Health Services, Maternal and Child Health Branch: Sacramento, CA, 1994. New AFLP Standards of Practice were adopted in October 1997. A dispute over whether Cal-Learn programs must operate under the new standards--which include a requirement for monthly face-to-face client contacts--or continue to operate under the 1994 standards had not been resolved as of the writing of this report.

16. *Pregnant and Parenting Student Programs: A Report to the Legislature as Required by the Supplemental Report of the 1995 Budget Act, Item 6110-001-001(1996)*, California Department of Education: Sacramento, CA, and *Guiding Principals to Implement Welfare Reform in Specific*



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*Education Policy Areas: A Working Document*, California Department of Education: Sacramento, CA, 1997.

17. Coley, R.L., and Chase-Lansdale, P.L. (1998). Adolescent pregnancy and parenthood: Recent evidence and future directions. *American Psychologist*, 53, 152-166.

18. The Pregnant Minor Program is a state-funded program available in 17 counties (see Appendix G). Many other counties and school districts operate special programs for pregnant students and refer to these as pregnant minor programs generically.

19. See, Nord, C. et. al., "Consequences of Teen-Age Parenting," *Journal of School Health*, 62: 310-318, 1992 cited in R. Maynard (Ed.), *Kids Having Kids: A Robin Hood Foundation Special Report on the Costs of Adolescent Childbearing*, 1996. On the increased likelihood of coming from single parent families, McLanahan, S. & G. Sandefur, *Growing Up with a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994. On the increased likelihood of being concentrated in poor neighborhoods, Taylor, D, Chavez, G., & Flores, C, *The Atlas of Births to California Teenagers, 1996*, Sacramento, CA: Maternal and Child Health Branch, California Dept. of Health Services, 1998. On the increased likelihood of being abused, Boyer, D. & Fine, D., "Sexual Abuse as a Factor in Adolescent Pregnancy and Child  
*Family Planning Perspectives*, 24:4-19, 1992. On poor school performance prior to becoming pregnant, *Pregnant and Parenting Student Programs, A Report to the Legislature*, California Department of Education, April, 1996.