

Proposed Evaluation Plan for the DLL Expansion Phase

I. Overview

The DLL Pilot Study Expansion Phase Evaluation will focus on (1) the conditions that support implementation of a range of strategies that have an ultimate goal of supporting DLL children and families, (2) if and how those strategies change systems within and across counties, and (3) the extent to which strategies are scalable and sustainable during and after COVID-19. Statewide evaluation of the DLL Pilot Study Expansion Phase will be conducted by F5CA's contracted evaluator ("state evaluator") and/or select staff of F5CA.

II. Principles and Context

- **The Expansion Phase Evaluation will align with the In-Depth Phase of the DLL Pilot Study conducted during FY 2019–20.** The in-depth study focuses on identifying instructional and family engagement practices associated with outcomes for children (i.e., effective practices) in different settings and for different age and language groups. Practices specifically measured in the in-depth study are based on what literature suggests is effective. F5CA recommends that the best focus for the Expansion study, is to examine the systems factors, barriers, and facilitators that influence whether such evidence-based practices can be implemented well and feasibly.
- **The Expansion Phase Evaluation will examine how counties adapt their work within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.** Findings from the study will answer questions about what is working well and what is not in regard to virtual strategies (and other strategies that align with public health guidelines) to support DLL children and families, particularly those in deep poverty. The study will explore what strategies are scalable within a "pandemic landscape" and which of these strategies are applicable – and scalable – in a post-pandemic context.
- **The overall Expansion Phase Evaluation will align with the local evaluations of counties.** The state's Expansion Phase Evaluation will summarize findings across the local evaluations in participating counties and will work with local evaluators throughout the study period to avoid duplication of effort and leverage existing work.

III. Overarching Research Questions

- **Implementation.** What factors drive or hinder successful implementation of counties' chosen strategies? Specifically, what factors facilitate or detract from effective strategies to (1) build the capacity of ECE educators to support DLL children and (2) engage and support DLL families, particularly those most in need?

- **Systems Change.** To what extent, and in what ways, did the DLL Expansion projects help change child-, family-, and provider-serving local systems in support of DLL children? What can the state learn from local system change efforts to strengthen statewide systems?
- **Sustainability and Scalability:** What are the lessons learned in regard to scaling and sustaining practices (locally and statewide) for DLL children and families, in the context of COVID-19 and in a post-COVID landscape?

IV. Evaluation Design and Data Collection Activities

The Expansion Phase state evaluator will engage all 16 counties in some capacity, mindful that at least seven counties will contract with an external evaluator to examine local efforts. During the evaluation planning phase, the state evaluator will work with local evaluators and DLL expansion lead agency staff to discuss their evaluation approaches, areas of focus, and data collection activities, as well as to engage in a dialogue about how the state evaluator can leverage, and not duplicate, local efforts. The state evaluator will work with counties to collect consistent data across counties without duplicating local efforts or overburdening staff, providers and families.

Some data collection activities will be conducted across all 16 counties (key informant interviews and convenings), whereas other strategies (provider and family surveys/interviews) will need to be adapted based on what counties are planning for their local evaluations. Data collection strategies may include, but are not limited to:

1. **Document Review:** Reviewing and analyzing all county work plans and other relevant documents such as progress reports that include updates on work achieved, numbers/demographics of clients served, and information about book distribution.
2. **County Leader Key Informant Interviews:** Conducting key informant interviews with county DLL Expansion project leaders, up to two individual or small group interviews per county.
3. **Provider Survey and Focus Groups:** Designing a set of survey items that are applicable across county projects (e.g., questions relevant across different types of PD activities) for counties to administer electronically as part of virtual activities (e.g., a link to a survey following provider trainings or a poll embedded into the a webinar) or integrate into existing local evaluation efforts. Follow-up focus groups may be created from a sample of early childhood educators who participated in DLL professional development events to provide in-depth qualitative data as context for the provider survey findings.
4. **Family Surveys and Family Interviews:** Designing a short set of survey items

to assess family perspectives on implementation, barriers, helpful features, and perceived outcomes – this survey, like the provider survey, would be relevant across different types of activities. Optional follow-up phone interviews would be used to gather in-depth family feedback on their experiences with Expansion Phase activities, as well as about their needs with respect to the COVID-19 health crisis.

5. **Convenings:** Documenting discussions during the DLL Expansion Phase county lead agency-hosted county convenings as a means to track ongoing implementation, including perceived impacts, barriers, facilitators, and system-level implications of the expansion funds.