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Christine Mathias, Elizabeth Gilman, Carolyn Shin & William Todd Evans

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California's Title IV-E Partnership: A Statewide University–Agency Collaboration—Characteristics and Implications for Replication

Christine Mathias, Elizabeth Gilman, Carolyn Shin, and William Todd Evans

University–agency partnerships funded by Title IV-E encourage students to enter the child welfare field by providing student stipends, thus supporting child welfare agency workforce development. This article examines the literature and historical roots of Title IV-E and other partnerships, identifies common structures and outcomes, and discusses the extent to which a structured development and change process supports the California partnership's core mission to integrate the education and practice communities in child welfare. The partnership is teleological in nature, using a social exchange approach to advance mutuality and a full spectrum of benefits for universities and agencies. Models and best practice elements are presented as examples of how university–agency partnerships may enhance child welfare service delivery.

The complex nature of partnerships or interorganizational relationships renders them fundamentally difficult to expand, change, and sustain over time as they require a continual reshaping and restructuring by the parties involved (Ring & Van De Ven, 1994). Further, a basic definition of partnership typically describes a “relationship resembling a legal partnership and usually involving close cooperation between parties and having specified and joint rights and responsibilities” (Partnership, n.d.). Given the fluid and sometimes uncertain nature of partnerships, relying on this basic idea can provide insight into the key drivers that sustain complex interorganizational partnerships over time. Partnerships between university social work departments and state and local child welfare agencies are a special variety of interorganizational relationships, with the involved entities adopting shared and individual–sector perspectives and priorities. While most university–agency partnerships tend to focus on curriculum and research needs in support of field and classroom educational activities, the nature of the contractual relationship is itself critically important. In partnerships using Title IV-E funds under the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (AACWA), the consequent obligations and products of this

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Christine Mathias is assistant director at California State University, Fresno. Elizabeth Gilman is curriculum and policy analyst, Carolyn Shin is interim director, and William Todd Evans is a graduate student researcher at the University of California, Berkeley.

Address correspondence to Christine Mathias, Bay Area Academy Training and Professional Development Center, California State University, Fresno, 2201 Broadway, Suite 705, Oakland, CA 94612, USA. E-mail: cmathias@csufresno.edu

Color versions of one or more of the figures in the article can be found online at <http://www.tandfonline.com/USWE>.

relationship are a necessary and driving force in the creation, development, maintenance, and evaluation of partnership goals and activities.

The partnership described in this article has developed over time from an articulated purpose to reprofessionalize public human services to strengthen workforce development factors contributing to good practice and to enhance positive outcomes for children and families through such elements as retention of well-qualified and skilled staff, reduction in turnover, and the creation of a culture of learning and professional development.

We also describe the nature of the California Title IV-E partnership as one that regularly reinforces, supports, and renews the contractual relationship within the context of the larger organizational purpose of supporting the workforce development needs of child welfare agencies. Driven by a larger purpose, programs developed within the partnership over a 24-year period such as, but not limited to, in-service training, distance education, and field education are products of a structured change process. This process is rooted in a goal-oriented, teleological theory of organizational change (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995) with contractual characteristics reflective of social exchange theory (Emerson, 1976). With this article, we seek to address a void in the literature regarding the structure of Title IV-E partnerships and the process by which these partnerships can evolve to the mutual benefit of universities and child welfare agencies.

History and Outcomes of Title IV-E Partnerships

University-agency IV-E partnerships were stimulated by the passage of the AACWA in 1980. Along with other provisions designed to improve child welfare services throughout the country, the AACWA allowed funding for the graduate-level training of child welfare workers. Although the AACWA was passed in 1980, most state agencies and universities did not begin using this funding to establish IV-E partnerships until the latter part of the decade (Hartinger-Saunders & Lyons, 2013).

In the field of child welfare, partnerships between universities and public child welfare agencies have historically sought to improve the delivery of child welfare services through a focus on professionalizing the child welfare workforce (Hopkins, Mudrick, & Rudolph, 1999). These university-agency partnerships have emerged to address persistent and often interrelated problems confronting child welfare services throughout the country, most notably a lack of professional training opportunities for child welfare workers and high turnover rates (Clark, 2003; Hartinger-Saunders & Lyons, 2013; Hopkins et al., 1999; Reilly & Petersen, 1997;).

The literature also indicates that providing educational opportunities for child welfare workers may positively affect and increase retention rates (Ellett, Ellett, & Rugutt, 2003; Jones, 2003; Scannapieco & Connell-Corrick, 2003; Zlotnik, DePanfilis, Daining, & Lane, 2005), and in other studies of IV-E programs, child welfare workers who receive professional training report feeling a greater sense of confidence in their skills and their overall ability to competently perform their jobs (Ellett et al., 2003; Hartinger-Saunders & Lyons, 2013; Hopkins et al., 1999; Scannapieco & Connell-Corrick, 2003; Zlotnik et al., 2005). Combined with organizational factors, such as a supportive relationship with supervisors, this suggests that the professional training child welfare workers receive in IV-E programs enables them to better negotiate and process the stressors of their demanding job, thereby mitigating burnout and increasing retention (Scannapieco & Connell-Corrick, 2003; Zlotnik et al., 2005). Yet even after the formation of Title IV-E partnerships and publication of the corresponding evidence from the literature, the

problems of high turnover and lack of well-trained staff remain a concern to most child welfare agencies (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2003, 2006).

In terms of other outcomes for child welfare workers, studies of university–agency partnerships have found that workers who complete an MSW program often report feeling more competent and skilled in their work as a result of their training (Hartinger-Saunders & Lyons, 2013; Hopkins et al., 1999; Leung & Willis, 2012). Beyond findings on retention and worker effects, however, the effectiveness of IV-E partnership programs remains understudied, and more should be done to increase program outcome evaluation, particularly on whether IV-E training programs ultimately lead to better outcomes for children and families (Hartinger-Saunders & Lyons, 2013). Whether improvements in training and retention of child welfare workers necessarily translates into improved outcomes for children and families remains an open question (Ellett, 2014; Hartinger-Saunders & Lyons, 2013).

Although the initial focus of the IV-E partnerships generally was to reprofessionalize the child welfare workforce, California’s Title IV-E partnership also sought to increase the diversity of the social work staff to better reflect the racial and cultural diversity of children in care and to increase the number of counties where MSWs are employed. Data suggest that the efforts by the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) to increase retention rates and increase the number of trained social workers recruited from historically underrepresented communities are succeeding (CalSWEC, 2011). In regard to retention, the percentage of IV-E graduates remaining employed in agencies after completing their 2-year work requirement has remained at the high rate of about 82% since the Partnership was founded (Title IV-E Stipend Program Final Report July 1, 2012–June 30, 2013), and the racial/ethnic composition of IV-E graduates has begun to reflect the populations being served by child public welfare agencies. (See Figure 1). Moreover, the number of MSWs in the state’s workforce has doubled from 21% to 40.5% since 1990 and CalSWEC graduates now work in 54 counties compared to 34 in 1990 (CalSWEC, 2013). These data demonstrate success in the original goals and objectives when CalSWEC was established but do little to reveal the effects of a graduate-educated workforce on the delivery of child welfare services.

Mutuality in University–Agency Partnerships

The key findings noted in the literature—that education promotes professionalization, greater confidence in skills, and perhaps a higher retention rate—tend primarily to support the university goal of providing education. Yet such findings do not adequately address the stated needs and goals of agencies regarding their workforce development needs: to recruit and retain staff to achieve better child and family outcomes. We argue that when IV-E partnerships engage universities and agencies in purposeful, cooperative, and contractual relationships, sustained impact on the provision of child welfare services can be achieved. For example, several child welfare improvements in California have been influenced by the partnership. Most notably, the Cultural Brokers Program, motivational interviewing, family group decision making, differential response, and kinship care have all benefitted from the partnership’s support in the form of empirically based curriculum enhancements that were disseminated throughout the state.

To better understand the nature of university–agency partnerships, it is helpful to look at how other disciplines assess the role of formal partnership structures in serving the mutual interests of universities and public and private agencies that serve various community needs. Across all fields, including public child welfare, such university–agency partnerships are increasingly seen as

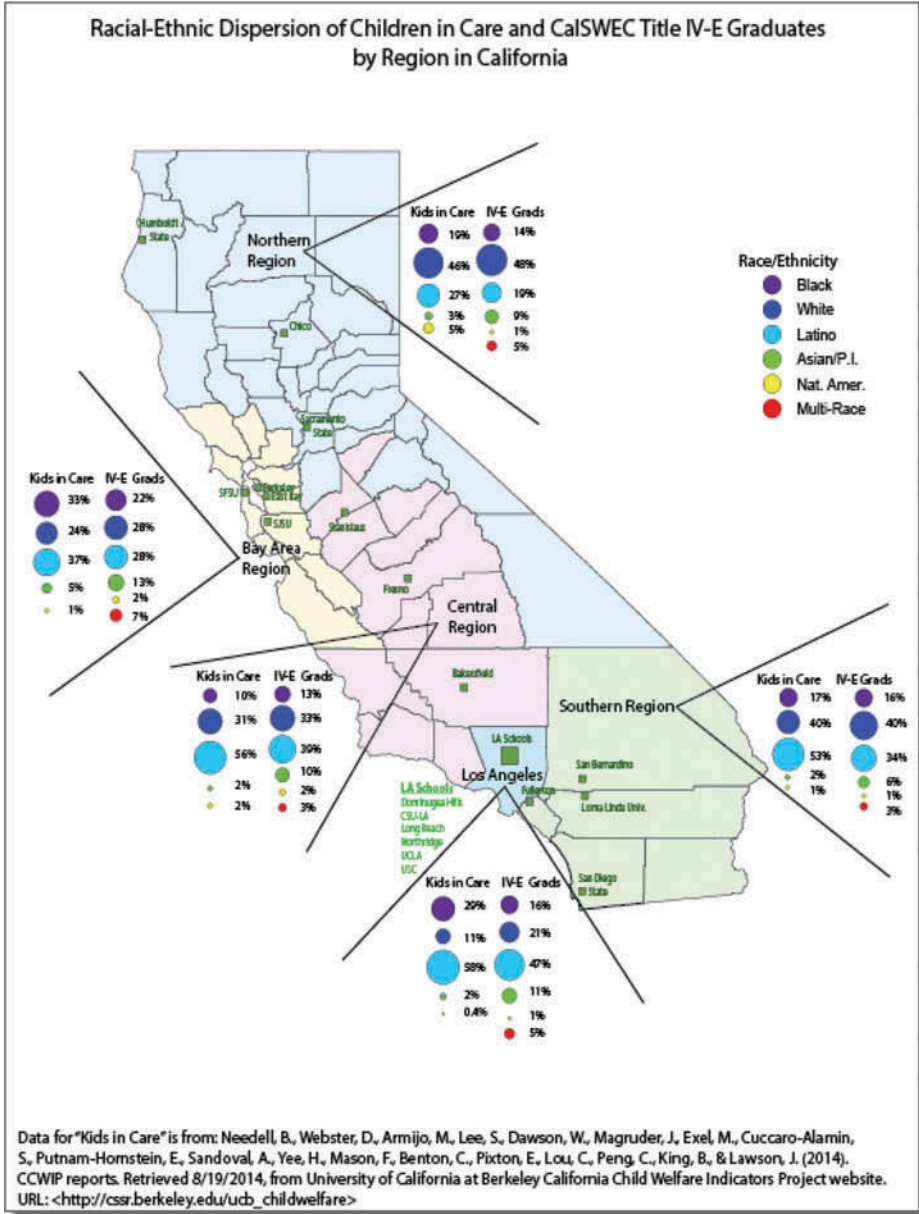


FIGURE 1 Title IV-E MSWs and BSWs in the workforce by race/ethnicity.

Note. Data from Needell et al., 2015.

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important mechanisms to use resources and facilitate communication across these institutions (Austin et al., 1999, p.90). Partnerships also can tailor the research capabilities and data collection resources of the university to the particular needs and interests of a public agency, community-based organization, or entity (Bumbarger & Campbell, 2012; Harper & Salina, 2000; Wastell, Kawalek, Langmead-Jones, & Ormerod, 2004). Partnerships may take the form of cooperative interorganizational relationships having contractual relationships (Ring & Van De Ven, 1992) that provide a framework for establishing commitments, standards for execution of agreed activities, and a process for negotiating new commitments and for evaluation. Nevertheless, in the field of public child welfare, the activities and programs developed through university–agency partnerships often center on curriculum development and improving training opportunities for child welfare workers, with little known attention paid to partnership evolution and maintenance.

Typically within contractual relationships, mutual understanding and benefits are articulated, executed, evaluated, and renegotiated in cyclical fashion (Ring & Van De Ven, 1994). Although specific factors contributing to the success of university–agency collaboration will vary across particular contexts (Reilly & Petersen, 1997), literature examining university–agency partnerships identifies several common elements that are critical to their growth and long-term success. These include an understanding of risk, uncertainty, and trust (Ring & Van De Ven, 1994) among the participants; a recognition of mutual self-interest; a commitment to the collaborative process; effective leadership and communication structures; a process to monitor and evaluate progress of partnership programs and activities; and access to funding (Austin et al., 1999; Clark, 2003; Reilly & Petersen, 1997; Rheaume, Collins, & Amodeo, 2011). These attributes address some of the key challenges identified by Dulmus and Cristalli (2011) as lack of trust, disparate power, establishment of priorities, funding conflicts and divergence in philosophy and values, and competing university–agency demands.

Although there are commonalities in the basic structure of IV-E partnerships across different states, there is much variation among them in all areas, including the number of agencies and universities involved, students served, governance structures, and funding sources (Cheung & Taylor, 2014). For instance, in some states, IV-E partnerships consist of only one university partner, while in several other states multiple campuses are represented (Cheung & Taylor, 2014). Among the state programs, the process and composition of stakeholder participation in partnerships varies according to the particular social, economic, and political landscape of that state. For example, in large states that delegate portions of decision-making authority over child welfare services to dozens of local counties, the task of forming and maintaining partnerships with consistency across the entire state becomes more complex. We will now describe California’s partnership structure, governance, and the developmental processes that are fundamental to sustainability.

THE CALIFORNIA PARTNERSHIP

Founded in 1990, CalSWEC is a large partnership between California public universities and public human service agencies, consisting of 22 schools and representatives from the 58 counties in the state. CalSWEC has grown into an umbrella organization that houses California’s Title IV-E program (hereafter referred to as the Partnership) among other workforce development

programs. Like other IV-E programs, California's model initially grew out of a collaborative effort by schools of social work and public human service agencies to improve the recruitment, professional training, and retention of child welfare workers (Clark, 2003). This early collaborative effort was spurred by the vision and initiative of Harry Specht, dean of the School of Social Welfare at the University of California, Berkeley. Specht was particularly concerned with what he saw as an abandonment of public service by professional social work programs. Rather than prepare students for careers in public agencies and community-based organizations, Specht noted, social work programs were preoccupied with preparing students for careers in private practice (Specht & Courtney, 1994). The development of Specht's vision coincided with a pressing need in the public child welfare agencies when the crack/cocaine epidemic struck California and brought about a substantial rise in the numbers of children suffering severe abuse and neglect, and who consequently required foster care placement. Specht's initial vision was to "produce professionals for careers in the publicly supported services focusing on underserved populations and to advance social work's commitment to the poor and the services upon which they depend" (CalSWEC, 2011b, p. 6).

Stimulated by this original vision and an examination of the workforce needs in child welfare at the time (CalSWEC, 2011b), the Partnership worked to increase the number of professionally trained social workers working in California's human service agencies who reflect the populations being served and to increase the number of counties where MSWs were employed by launching its Title IV-E partnership. These objectives continue to function as the key indices used by California's Title IV-E partnership to measure the success of its partnership programs and activities (Johnson & Mathias, 2006).

INITIAL VISION AND STRUCTURE

The elements of the initial mission of the Partnership, which remains central to this day, provided a framework that was used to establish the scope of the original contract and all subsequent contracts between the California Department of Social Services, schools of social work, and the county welfare directors, and provide a means to hold each partner accountable. In 1999 the mission expanded to include a new component: "Facilitate the integration of education and practice to assure the effective ... service delivery" (CalSWEC Mission and Goals, n.d.). The goals set forth to address this component were to recruit and prepare diverse social workers, defining and operationalizing a continuum of social work education and training; engage in research and evaluation of best practices, advocate for responsive social policies and appropriate resources and explore other models and structures to ... accomplish the mission.

These goals provide a more refined framework and program definition that guide the day-to-day operations and functions of the Partnership; as a result they have focused the partnership in specific ways as described in the next section.

It should be noted that the original intent was broader than child welfare. It was to return social workers to working with the poor and by extension working in the publicly funded sectors rather than in private clinical practice. However, with availability of Title IV-E funding for training child welfare workers, the Partnership evolved into having child welfare social work as its core activity.

Model of Collaboration and Governance

The Partnership can best be described as a distributed networked organization with 22 subcontracting program sites and one central operation (CalSWEC). Its most fundamental activity is to teach a sector-specific set of competencies with the sole purpose of educating and training people preparing for work in a public child welfare agency. The center provides curricular, programmatic, and fiscal oversight and guidance for the other 22 sites that are responsible for educating the students; developing field, curricular, and training resources; and assisting graduates in obtaining suitable employment. Considering these essential functions, it becomes clear that the California Partnership is a workforce development organization for current and future social workers who express the intent to work in the public sector. This identity, evolved over time, has changed the nature of the partnership by prioritizing mutual benefit as a core value in its work with its stakeholders.

As a collaborative of many different entities within the state, CalSWEC's longevity and accomplishments can be attributed partially to its being founded on a set of shared ideals that were subsequently embedded into the contractual relationship. Over time, the collaboration has evolved, but the ideals have persisted arguably because they connect to the larger value base of social work education. Initially, CalSWEC's leaders rallied around those ideals, creating a nexus and a common purpose between social work education and public social services with each needing the other and willing to act cooperatively to further their divergent goals. Specifically, the initial collaborative efforts were focused on the development and implementation of a curriculum to be delivered to students by each of the schools. As the increasingly larger organization moved into the late 1990s and the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, the specific functions of the central coordinating body and the collaborating schools were clarified, and collaboration necessarily became more formalized, as reflected in CalSWEC's current governance structure.

The governance structure of CalSWEC has changed over time, but at its core, it ensures broad stakeholder participation in the program goals, initiatives, and directions through a board of directors that is sanctioned by the contract with the state. On a triannual basis the board, composed of deans or directors of schools of social work and county welfare and mental health directors, convene to discuss topics in the following domains: child welfare, mental health, aging, curriculum, workforce development, and research and program evaluation. In addition, the center convenes regular meetings with program sites on operational topics including program and curriculum implementation and development, student recruitment and support, retention, and fiscal and contract compliance. In these meetings contractual compliance, program goals, activities, and achievements are regularly discussed and celebrated, or if necessary, modified. The usual practice is to draft work plans and agendas in a collective manner by regularly asking for contributions from members and constituent groups. This is one way the partnership strives to balance the needs of social work education departments and the child welfare agencies; the practice appears to be a key element in sustainable partnerships. Through these methods, California's Partnership arguably reinforces an exchange of ideas and actively involves monetary and human resources (Emerson, 1976) in the state that are essential to workforce development in public human services. It is important to note that over time the Partnership has weathered many leadership changes in all of its stakeholder groups ranging from the state department of social services, the schools of social work, and county child welfare services. Although it might seem

counterintuitive, it is precisely because of these changes that the Partnership became more institutionalized. For example, the Partnership's board includes in its membership a representative of the state department of social services, so when leadership changes at the state, the Partnership reaches out and establishes new relationships with state staff through its formal board membership process. In regard to maintaining relationships with county child welfare stakeholders, CalSWEC staff attend monthly statewide meetings to maintain contact with the practice community's issues, needs and trends to cycle those issues, needs and trends back into the schools of social work. Additionally, when there are leadership changes in the schools of social work, the Partnership provides an annual orientation for new members. Although seemingly simple, these activities serve as critical functions in the maintenance and development of the Partnership.

Fiscal Structure and Support

In addition to federal funding available through Title IV-E from the federal Administration for Children and Families, CalSWEC's Partnership is supported by matching funds from all the partner universities. Other funders include the California Department of Social Services, the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, and an array of private foundations that have over the years been aligned with CalSWEC's workforce development mission and methods.

The fiscal structure that underpins CalSWEC's IV-E Program is another example of the Partnership's collaborative nature and reinforces the involvement of stakeholders. Through an annual contracting process there is an opportunity for all partners to revisit the fiscal structure and the purpose of the program. This process, while cumbersome, time consuming, and challenging, provides another structured mechanism for stakeholder input, engagement, and investment in the program (Ring & Van De Ven, 1992). Figure 2 provides a graphical representation of the fiscal structure and contractual obligations of the Partnership. Embedded in the obligation of each site are partnership and curricular, field, and student support activities and requirements that meet the regulatory demands of Title IV-E funding. A critical element that can be drawn from this figure is the mutuality that must exist to meet the regulatory requirements of Title IV-E funding and the competing demands and the complementary agendas of the university and child welfare agency.

PURPOSEFUL CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Based on the historical and fiscal context of the Partnership's creation, we now address its development and evolution, and submit that the changes and programs developed over time demonstrate why the Partnership has been sustained by using a structured change process reflecting what Van de Ven and Poole (1995) refer to as the teleological theory of change within organizations. The teleological theory encompasses purposeful goal-setting processes by members of the organization; these processes are established within a social context, and members share key metaphors that allow them to engage in purposeful and intentional cooperation because of a lofty and socially idealized goal. The process of change, based on what is learned at each stage, is broken down into four parts in repetitive sequence: goal formulation,

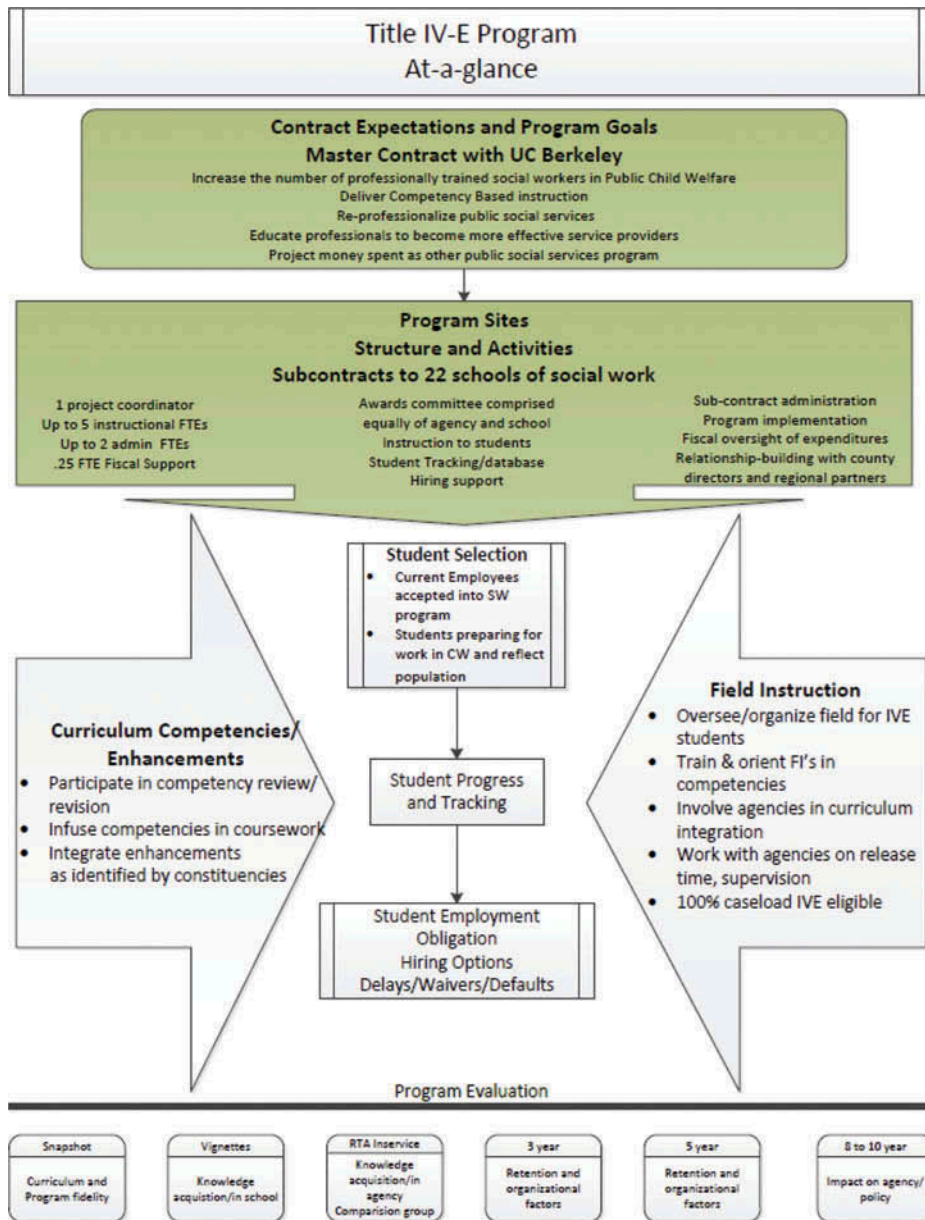


FIGURE 2 Fiscal and contractual structure.

implementation, evaluation, and modification. By engaging in recurrent goal setting and processes that ensure adaptation to changed circumstances, the Partnership has been able to reach its desired goals, for the most part.

The following section includes descriptions of key variations incorporated into the Partnership. These modifications demonstrate teleological and social exchange theories and processes in action, and embody efforts to balance the contributions of social work education and public child welfare agencies to achieve mutually identified goals. Finally, the development and ultimate implementation of the most recent innovation in California's Partnership, the IV-E field model, is discussed.

Example 1: Focus on In-Service Training

CalSWEC's program portfolio includes the Regional Training Academy Coordination Project (RTA). This program supports the provision of in-service training and professional development for current child welfare staff and collaborates with six regional and statewide training partners. This coordination effort supports consistency, competency, and the professional development of all current child welfare staff (not just social work graduates). This is accomplished through the collaborative development of a standardized statewide in-service training curriculum (common core), statewide training evaluation, inclusion of fairness and equity in child welfare services training, and the support of evidence-based practices.

The Title IV-E social work competencies, values, and ethics underpin all curriculum development work in the RTA. In this way, social work practice and values are embedded in the child welfare agencies across the state. Conversely, the RTA program also provides an organizational vehicle in CalSWEC to funnel emerging content from the field to the schools of social work. Specifically, the activities of the RTA are discussed at the Partnership's board meetings and annual symposia on fairness and equity, evidence-based practices, and new child welfare initiatives that are regularly attended by university faculty. Finally, the RTA core curriculum and the IV-E field model have been cross-walked to identify the integration points of on-the-job training and IV-E field instruction. These activities serve as tangible linkages between schools of social work and public child welfare.

Example 2: The Mental Health and Child Welfare Connection

With the passage of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) in 2004, funding became available to support comprehensive changes in the California public mental health system. Desired changes included services to promote recovery for those with severe mental illness; to provide client-centered, culturally competent, and linguistically accessible services; and to foster stigma reduction in communities. Because of its history as an established partnership of universities, county agencies, and state entities, CalSWEC was well positioned to assist with the MHSA social work education and training component. As a result, CalSWEC's Mental Health Program (MHP) distributes MHSA funds annually to schools of social work in the form of stipends for graduate students to pursue careers in public or nonprofit mental health services. The MHP is similar in structure to the Title IV-E Stipend Program and offers the potential for child welfare and mental health to become more integrated in approach. This has been an added benefit, given the Administration for Children and Families' focus on well-being in recent years. As part of this program, curriculum modules have been developed for faculty such as, for example, Specialized Interventions for Children and Transition-Age Youth with Severe Emotional Disabilities and

Child Welfare–Mental Health Collaboration. These modules are available to all Title IV-E and mental health students.

Example 3: Supporting Rural Regions Through Distance Education

The rural-focused Pathway Program provides an example of how the use of the IV-Program's administrative data was used to engage stakeholders in a dialogue about addressing the workforce needs of rural and remote counties. After a review of Title IV-E graduate hiring trends, it was found that in many geographically remote regions of the state, the IV-E Program experienced little success in attracting and employing graduates. Focus-group data and a county stakeholder input processes were used to add specificity about how to address the need. These data were used to develop the Pathway Program (Mathias & Benton, 2011), which is designed to serve the educational needs of social workers in county child welfare agencies in remote and rural areas as well as those distant from a university with a BSW/MSW program. Begun in late 2008, this distance-education program was designed to support students at different stages of their education, from the BA in social work to the MSW. It supports the student via tuition assistance, travel reimbursement, tailored student support, and Web-based course work to provide access to social work education at most levels of educational need. The current curricular focus of the program is on rural social work practice. The lessons learned from this process centered on the enhanced partnership engagement with county leadership and use of an iterative method to vet model development and implementation. While not intended at the outset, the development of the Pathway Program set the stage for the next phase of California's Partnership development—the design and implementation of the IV-E field model.

Example 4: Articulating Mutual Benefit—The IV-E Field Model

At the outset, the Partnership agreement between schools of social work and the county and state social services department stipulated that appropriate MSW-supervised fieldwork experience would be provided to students. Additionally, other supports were extended in the form of release time for agency field instructors to instruct students, release or flexible time to part-time agency employee students to attend school, and giving hiring preference to program graduates. During 2007–08, a statewide economic downturn, along with changing staff caseloads and the turnover of supervisory child welfare staff, severely eroded the supply of Title IV-E public agency and nonprofit field placements around the state, and broad institutional familiarity with the CalSWEC partnership agreement was compromised.

Around the same time, the Council on Social Work Education stated that field education is the “signature pedagogy” of social work (Council on Social Work Education, 2008). When this change occurred, the Curriculum Committee of the CalSWEC board began discussing field placement issues and needs. Committee members agreed it was not enough to merely maintain minimum placement capacity, and as a result a goal was established to enhance the collaborative structures between the schools of social work and public child welfare agencies to support sustainable high-quality, well-supervised fieldwork experiences despite changes in the broader economy.

Stressing the essential character of field education for the future, the overall political trend of dismantling safety nets has had an impact on social services and in the past decades has left agencies with fewer staff with increased demand for services. This dynamic raised the significance

of field instruction for agencies (Reisch & Jarman-Rohde, 2000). Marion Bogo (2010) acknowledged further that employers highly value the field practicum because of its direct preparation for practice: Agencies appreciate securing new workers who are oriented to agency policies, practices, and organizational culture. To meet the needs for well-prepared staff members in economically challenged agencies, these authors argued that enhanced university-agency cooperation is required to make certain students have the skills, values, experience, and personal qualities to work effectively in an increasingly stressful work environment (Bogo, 2010; Reisch & Jarman-Rohde, 2000). Moreover, they called for innovation among schools of social work, urging their administrators to consider the possible benefits of creating rotating field sites, developing new agency forms for the purpose of education, and modifying existing agency structures to integrate service, education, and research more effectively (Reisch & Jarman-Rohde, 2000).

Other scholars observed that schools of social work may need to reconfigure the university-agency relationship, develop more field-centered education, and reassert the community-based origins of the profession (Glassman, 2008).

To address the needs and concerns discussed by the Curriculum Committee of the CalSWEC board, the center conducted a field capacity survey of member schools to better assess the depth and breadth of the issues, which confirmed that capacity and quality of field placements were compromised. Additionally, an annual survey was conducted of new Title IV-E graduates to assess their educational experiences as they related to their (re)entry into the field as child welfare workers. The data collected from the students consistently indicated that their field experience was lacking in relevance and breadth (see Table 1). As a result of these partner-initiated inquiries, surveys, and the recession, the Field Instruction Initiative was formed at the end of 2008. At its inception those within the Partnership called for a multiyear initiative to develop a systematic, long-term structural plan for creating and sustaining high-quality field placement opportunities statewide. The goal was to be attained by engaging county and university partners in the development of pilot-tested models that could be spread throughout the schools and agencies. In response, the center embarked on a sequence of stakeholder conversations and data gathering consistent with the center's history of engaging key stakeholders and partners in a mutually beneficial way. The following in-depth case example of the collaborative stakeholder process in action is illustrative of the methods the Partnership uses to sustain its work.

In Phase One members of the schools of social work and county stakeholder groups formed to focus on strategies and resources needed to develop new ways to deliver field instruction to IV-E students. In 2010, as a result of this work, two schools along with their county partners initiated pilot projects to test their ideas. One site developed an enhanced field seminar directed at competency development combined with focused work with field instructors on how to teach the competencies in the field. The second project developed a solution-focused supervision model in the county to enhance the supervision skills of county child welfare staff and supervision of IV-E students. This includes monthly group meetings at the agency conducted by IV-E Faculty.

To expand the work to more sites, a request for proposals was issued to all partner schools in 2011 resulting in an additional two sites receiving funds to develop and implement their unique, tailored, and focused projects for 2 years. The additional models focused on developing first-year field placements in community college programs serving foster youths, and the fourth developed a partnered research model that used faculty, agency staff, and IV-E students to identify and carry out research projects needed by the agency. Throughout this phase, the center provided evaluative support and technical assistance. As the third year of Field Instruction

TABLE 1
Title IV-E Field Model Development and Feedback

<i>Method</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>General Feedback</i>
2005–2009 new grad survey review	Title IV-E new graduates	<i>n</i> = 508	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Found valuable direct client work, variety of PCW experience, effective supervision/shadowing • Wanted more variety of PCW experience; effective supervision/shadowing; experience with other agencies and court
2012 model feedback survey	FDs, FLs, PCs, faculty, CW directors, managers, FIs	<i>n</i> = 53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 81% positive response to field model overall • Support for standardizing curriculum and improving partnership activities • Most concerned about 2-year rotation model from university side. Students support this change. • Need to balance “standardization” with flexibility • Concerned about resources
2012 focus groups (5 groups)	PCs, FDs, CW directors, managers, RTA, alumni	<i>n</i> = 46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for standardizing curriculum and improving partnership activities • Most concerned about 2-year rotation model from university side; students support this change • Need to balance standardization with flexibility • Concern about resources
2012–13 stakeholder meetings (8 meetings)	D & Ds, FDs, PCs, faculty, CW directors, managers, intern coordinators, FIs, RTA, alumni, CBOs	<i>n</i> = 165	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 84% of respondents reported fair to wholehearted support of the model • Issues to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • technology • CBO development • how to leverage support from leadership • cultivating critical thinking • how to integrate core training into the IV-E field, align classroom- and field-based learning

Note. CBO = community-based organization; CW director = child welfare director; D & D = deans and directors; FD = field director; FI = field instructor; FL = field liaison; PC = project coordinator; RTA = regional training academy.

Initiative implementation closed, the center staff began to explore strategies for spreading these best practices in field instruction.

In Phase Two from 2012 to 2013, the center engaged in another round of stakeholder input using an iterative process of information gathering and feedback to develop, vet, and refine what was to become the Title IV-E field model (see [Table 2](#)). Implementation of the model began in the summer/fall of 2013. The vision for a unified model for Title IV-E field instruction with a structure sufficient to be replicated and evaluated while remaining sensitive to the differences in each partnership became an integral and hotly debated part of the stakeholder engagement process. For instance, some schools felt the model was attempting to dictate curriculum and program delivery methods, others felt it was an innovative way to engage community and incorporate curriculum enhancements, and still others felt that it was simply a condition of running their IV-E program. From the county child welfare agency perspective, the model provided an opportunity to enhance field operations and develop closer ties with local universities.

TABLE 2
Title IV-E Field Model Components

<i>Components and Guiding Principles</i>	<i>Function and Activities</i>
Field Instructor Recruitment and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification, development, support and training of qualified and interested field instructors (FIs) • Shared FI training among schools within regions
<i>Advancing Professional Development of current PCW staff</i>	
Placement selection process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-year integrated internship experience exposing students to variety of PCW/CBO settings • PCW experienced vs. non-experienced field instruction options-3-tiered system • Field selection replacement process
<i>Shared decision making process with equal participation</i>	
Field curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-year IV-E seminar and field instructor curriculum based on PCW concepts and practice-related assignments • Participation in “learning communities” and ongoing training/coaching experiences for students • Implementation of Field Experience Inventory • Development and integration of trainings and coaching into student experience
<i>Integration of seminar and field instruction curriculum connecting theory to practice</i>	
Mutual Partnership Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field Instruction delivered by agency staff using individual group or unit model • MOAs that define: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Roles and responsibilities for FIs, liaisons, preceptors, students ○ Release time agreements ○ Enhanced training and support in agency (from university staff/faculty) for FIs ○ Instructional support in school (from agency staff) ○ Adjunct appointments of university staff to deliver field instruction or field unit (if needed) • Resource sharing and leveraging to assist partnership and support the instruction
<i>Shared decision making supports needed for the delivery of the curriculum</i>	

Premised on CalSWEC’s mission and the Partnership’s goal to increase the number of professional social workers in public child welfare, the model contains two major elements: increasing partnership activities between university and public child welfare agencies and enhancing and creating more consistency in field instructor trainings, IV-E field courses, and in-agency instructional supports. Through these methods, the field model suggests that Title IV-E graduates will be better prepared to enter the workforce with increased knowledge and awareness of public child welfare social work practice expectations, thus increasing retention and the competency of Title IV-E graduates in public child welfare. The model that took shape after the extensive stakeholder input process is organized into four components guided by basic principles and understandings between the schools of social work in the CalSWEC consortium and the county agencies they work with. The four components shown in Table 2 are:

1. Mutual partnership activities. This process requires schools and agencies to meet regularly to develop and revise memoranda of agreement to define and formalize the activities, roles, and responsibilities of all parties involved, measures of success, and the communication plan for each of the other components of the model.

2. Field instructor recruitment and support. This ensures that students are matched with field instructors who have practice and teaching skills to provide a rich and well-rounded learning experience. This component focuses on increasing collaboration to select, orient, train, and provide ongoing support and professional development to field instructors.
3. Placement selection and process. This defines the field experience as an integrated internship throughout the course of the degree program that exposes students to a variety of public child welfare and community-based practice settings. *Placement selection* refers to the annual review by county and university partners of noncounty, community-based placements with a potential for rotation to ensure that a relevant and complementary field experience for students is provided. *Placement process* refers to a targeted assessment of student experience and learning needs to place each student in internships that provide an integrated continuum of field learning over the course of the MSW program.
4. Field curriculum. Its purpose is to integrate classroom and field learning, connecting theory to practice. This component involves an enhanced and standardized curriculum for specific Title IV-E field courses and a field experience inventory to be used by field instructors to guide student learning in the field. The development of learning communities and coaching methods for student learning experiences is encouraged.

To support the implementation of the four components, the center offers an array of support resources and technical assistance that include online resources and tools, monthly webinars, monthly newsletters, an annual Title IV-E Summer Field Institute, regional partnership meeting support, and evaluation support. All schools are participating in a 3 year rolling implementation process with full implementation at all schools by 2018.

After reviewing first-year activities and postsurveys, and based on preliminary anecdotal feedback, the field model has been successful in enhancing university/county partnerships and bringing all levels of university–agency organizations to the table to support Title IV-E field instruction. Local IV-E partnerships now routinely discuss field instruction as an important strategy for a strong and committed public child welfare workforce and hold annual meetings to reinforce the mutual benefits for universities and county agencies. For universities, students receive high-quality and consistent field instruction that is connected to their classroom experience. For county agencies, existing child welfare staff have access to an array of support and professional development opportunities by serving as field instructors, and incoming child welfare workers who have completed the Title IV-E program have a solid foundation for building their child welfare practice. Moreover, the model supports the development of learning organizations in child welfare and the ability for the university to reinforce the connection between theory and practice through enhanced support for student learning in applied practice settings. For example, one university–agency partnership agreed to embed a field liaison in the county agency to provide supervision to IV-E student but also to provide ongoing professional development to field instructors and other interested staff. Other partnerships have developed 2-year field rotation models for some students. The point here is that by focusing on values, shared goals, and mutual benefit, the IV-E field model addresses long-standing workforce development challenges in child welfare, such as supervision capacity and retention, and has sown fertile ground for providing more effective services to children and families in California.

EVALUATION: FROM ADMINISTRATIVE DATA TO PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Early in the Partnership, the need for evaluation was a necessary component to receiving Title IV-E funding. Early evaluation efforts focused on questions ranging from the more administrative program outputs (e.g., numbers of graduates) to student outcomes (e.g., graduates' evaluation of their own educational preparation). The ultimate evaluation goal, which is the direction the program is moving toward, has been to find ways to measure Title IV-E graduate practice knowledge acquisition compared to those graduates without specialized education. Similarly, the in-service training component of CalSWEC, has also sought to evaluate the learning of its trainees.

The most recent development in the Partnership's evaluation schema is the development of a longitudinal model that attempts to make sense of the various contributions of education, in-service training, and organizational supports, among other factors (e.g., student and worker characteristics), to determine the effectiveness of the social work workforce in providing high-quality service to the children and families they serve. In previous years, data have been gathered at critical intervals after Title IV-E students' graduation to assess if graduates are prepared for child welfare social work practice, the length of their tenure in the public child welfare field, and factors that enhance and detract from optimal retention in the field. A proposed study, the County Workforce Study, should answer questions that were posed by previous studies and also delve deeper to understand the complex interrelationships between worker and organizational characteristics and case outcomes.

The County Workforce Study replaces previous workforce and retention studies and will incorporate the evaluation of the IV-E field model. In the first phase of this study, CalSWEC is recruiting five to six counties (a mix of small, medium, and large) to test CalSWEC's ecological model of workforce development. Child welfare staff from participating counties will respond to a staff survey, which will cover a number of attitudinal, organizational, and demographic questions (e.g., commitment to the agency and child welfare, perceptions of organizational culture and climate, respondent age, gender, Title IV-E status). Data from administrative systems and any accessible data from counties' human resources systems will also be gathered. These three sources of data (i.e., staff survey, administrative, and human resources) will be integrated to understand the relationships between worker attitudes and perceptions (e.g., perceptions of organization culture, job satisfaction) and outcomes at the level of children and families. For example, we know that since 2004 the number of children in state care has dropped by 31% (Needell et al., 2015). However, we do not know which factors have an impact on such child and family outcomes. This study seeks to better understand the dynamics of education, training, and organizational factors that affect child and family outcomes. Phase One of this study is expected to be completed by July 2015.

CONCLUSION

As noted earlier, the purpose of this article is not only to examine the several innovative aspects of the CalSWEC Partnership as it has grown over time but also to illuminate distinct characteristics that have sustained the Partnership and fostered its identity as a cooperative, multifaceted

educational and training entity that uses a structure change process. Notably, as CalSWEC has evolved and matured over the years, it has retained elements cited by scholars as essential to successful long-term partnerships: trust among the participants; mutual self-interest; commitment to collaboration, effective leadership, and communication structures; a process to monitor and evaluate progress of partnership programs and activities; and access to funding (Austin et al., 1999; Bellamy et al., 2008; Clark, 2003; Reilly & Petersen, 1997). CalSWEC's hallmarks have been its use of an iterative process, consensus, collaboration, cooperative communication, and organizational structures to execute ideas generated.

These characteristics have allowed the organization to successfully adapt to and weather economic and social change with resilience, skill, and energy. The shared ideals of social betterment explicit in the field of social work, along with its embracing a purposeful, structured change process, have arguably reinforced CalSWEC's positive organizational characteristics and capacity for growth.

The process used in developing CalSWEC's IV-E field model embodies all the elements of success in a partnership. The model began with the perception of a need; proceeded to meetings to develop ideas; continued to communication, consensus, and collaboration; progressed to model design and piloting; and continues toward further development and refinement to address regional needs. It provides a case study for how a teleological, interorganizational partnership might go about creating a useful, adaptable educational model while maintaining the mutuality typical of social exchange theory. The field model will continue to evolve over time through collaboration and in response to changing participant requirements. A similar iterative, collaborative process will doubtless characterize the further development of other program innovations, such as tailored supports for students in rural areas.

In planning for the future, the Partnership anticipates a greater degree of collaboration among previously separate areas of social welfare practice, several of which are represented on the CalSWEC Board of Directors. While child welfare is by definition the central concern of Title IV-E, the safety and well-being of children is inevitably affected by health and mental health care and the status of caregiving family members, many of whom may be aging adults. Two major developments, the advent of the federal Affordable Care Act and the settlement of the *Katie A. v. Bonta* class-action mental health services lawsuit filed in 2002 in California are influencing current and planned social work education and training. The need for integrated mental health services in foster care as well as an increased concern for the health and well-being of aging populations nationwide have sparked CalSWEC's inclusion of these knowledge areas into its strategic planning, requiring development of a structured, multidisciplinary approach. Future child welfare social workers are likely to be working collaboratively with several other professionals, and they will need educational modalities to prepare them for this expanded role.

Along with the need to develop training in full collaboration with other disciplines, CalSWEC also plans a future evaluation agenda in which the effectiveness of IV-E partnership programs are more closely examined to reveal some of the factors and characteristics, educational and individual, that contribute to better outcomes for children and families. The teleological nature and ideals of CalSWEC's Partnership, along with its effective, iterative development and change process, should permit the organization to progress in this area as well.

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