

**A Review of Issues,
Recommended Improvements,
and Best Practices
for the
Centralized Eligibility List**

Foreword

In 2010, the California Department of Education (CDE), Child Development Division (CDD) convened a group of Centralized Eligibility List (CEL) Administrators to identify current issues and propose recommendations for program improvement. This report outlines their findings and recommendations. This report was developed with funding from the CDE, CDD; however, the contents do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the CDE, CDD.

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Background

Prior to the development of the Centralized Eligibility List (CEL), each California Department of Education (CDE), Child Development Division (CDD)-funded child care and development contractor kept a list of families and children waiting to enroll as required by *California Code of Regulations*, Title 5 (5 CCR), Section 18106(e), to maintain full enrollment and fully expend their CDE contract. These waiting lists were traditionally for the exclusive use of each contractor. Furthermore, with so many families waiting to access the much-needed subsidized services, families might place themselves on several waiting lists for different contractors in the hope of becoming top priority for one program. With each contractor maintaining its own subsidy waiting list and families trying to ensure consideration in becoming top priority for spaces that might open up, the same individuals were at multiple sites, resulting in a substantial duplication of waiting list numbers. In some circumstances, contractors had no waiting list to turn to when openings occurred. This was a disadvantage for both the contractor and for families waiting for care.

Centralized Eligibility List Pilot

In October 2000, the CDD announced the availability of \$1.5 million in one-time state funding to support a CEL Pilot Project, to explore the challenges and benefits of various CEL systems. Nine counties (Butte, Fresno, Glenn, Kern, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Mateo, Solano, and Ventura) participated from spring 2001 through June 2003. The evaluation study, conducted at the conclusion of the Pilot Project, found that specific program criteria, data definitions, and mandatory participation terms were necessary for the development of consistent centralized lists.

Statewide Centralized Eligibility List Implementation

Senate Bill (SB) 68 (Chapter 78), enacted July 19, 2005, added Section 8227 to the California *Education Code (EC)* and established the requirement for each county to develop and administer a CEL for families waiting to obtain CDE, CDD-administered subsidized child care and development services. The legislation required contractors to participate and use the county CEL in order to be eligible for continued funding from the CDE.

Management Bulletin (MB) 05-13, issued November 2005, informed all CDD contractors of the mandatory participation in the CEL and the changes in state law regarding CELs. The MB also required that all CDD contractors participate prior to June 30, 2006.

Statewide CEL implementation offered potential benefits to many different groups. For parents seeking care, the CEL enabled families to have access to all CDD-funded programs in the county for which they qualified, expanding a family's opportunity to obtain subsidized child care. It ensured that the highest-priority families were offered

child care services first, meeting the statutory requirement. For providers interested in efficient ways to fill available spaces, the CEL would allow CDD-funded centers and Alternative Payment Programs (APPs) to have access to a larger number of eligible families, enhancing their ability to fully earn their contracts. For county Local Planning Councils (LPCs), the CEL data could be a valuable tool to address regional demand for subsidized care, including meeting the *EC*, Section 8499.5(b)(2) requirement to assess local priorities. The data collected would be a valuable statewide resource for future strategic planning in funding the needs of eligible families waiting for subsidized child care.

Purpose of Report

CELs have been implemented and have been operating consistently since 2006 in all counties. After four years of operation, CEL implementation has highlighted certain weaknesses in the subsidy system and has identified certain barriers in meeting the needs of the most eligible families, while adhering to state regulations and fully earning contract funds. While these weaknesses and barriers are inherent in the subsidized child care system as it has evolved, use of the CEL emphasized them and added to the existing complications faced by CDD contractors.

As complaints from contractors increased, CEL administrators responded by adjusting their procedures, adding in new system functions, and taking a more interactive role with families seeking subsidized care. From this crucible of complexity, complaint, and response emerged ideas and practices for improving CEL functions, access, and understanding on the part of families seeking subsidized services.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Delineate the issues arising from CEL implementation.
- Provide recommendations for further improvements.
- Describe best practices.

Key Issues and Recommendations for Practice and Policy Change

A. Income Ranking

The system of income rankings was developed many years ago and is a mathematical representation of financial need based on dividing the income ceiling, currently 75 percent of State Median Income (SMI)¹, into 66 nearly identical income bands with incremental increases based on family size. The range in income differences between ranks varies with family size so that the least difference is \$47 a month for a family of two, gradually increasing to \$83 per month for a family of 12.

Logically, one can say that a family earning \$47 dollars less per month is “needier” than a family earning \$47 more per month. However, the reality is that both of these eligible families are needy and placing them in artificially narrow ranks does not adequately describe the need or lessen the complications of the child development system.

Issues

- Families frequently under-report income and even a \$50 difference in estimating can change the eligibility rank for a family at the time of enrollment. This makes it difficult for programs enrolling families who they believe to be in a higher priority rank when, as documentation is presented, the family is actually in a lower priority rank. This frequently delays enrollments, which makes it difficult to fully earn a contract.
- It is difficult to explain or justify the fairness to families related to which rank they are in and how that affects searches to identify families for enrollment. A family of two earning \$900 a month (current rank 10) may sit on the CEL for months or years as other families earning just a little bit less (\$840, rank 9) enter the CEL system later, but are given a higher rank/priority for enrollment before that rank 10 family. This is very difficult for families to understand or to accept as fair.
- All families, in at least the first 10 ranks, are very low income. As long as we do not consider anything other than gross income (not rent, transportation costs or other expenses), then we do a disservice to families in these income categories by creating artificial ranks based on very narrow income differences. A family making \$50 or \$100 more per month is not able to support themselves any more than a family with slightly less income.

¹ 2011–12 Budget language will adjust the income ceiling to 70% of SMI; this would not affect the underlying concept or the proposal to collapse ranks. It would however change the actual income limits for each collapsed rank.

- Contractors deal with constant turnover of families “seeking work” who are enrolled first based on rank 1 income levels. The current system of income rankings unfairly pits working families against “seeking work” families. The very narrow ranks are particularly onerous for families who are working and have immediate need for child care and development services. Because they are working, they tend to have incomes that are slightly higher than families where the parent is seeking work. Because of these slight income differences, it is more likely a family seeking work will be enrolled over a working family. However, unless the “seeking work” family is able to obtain a job within 60 days, they lose the child care and the contractor has to start the search and enrollment process from the beginning. This can negatively affect the ability of a program to fully earn its contract, and often results in additional workload and administrative costs on the part of the contractor.
- Unlike working families, families that are enrolled under the “seeking work” criteria, often do not send their children to the child care and development program on a consistent basis. The increased absences make it difficult for contractors to fully earn their contracts.

Recommendations

In order to address the concerns listed above and create a more equitable and rational system of income rankings, it is recommended that the CDE consider collapsing ranks, from 66 income bands (ranks) to 6 as follows:

- Ranks 1 through 10 = New Rank 1
- Ranks 11 through 20 = New Rank 2
- Ranks 21 through 30 = New Rank 3
- Ranks 31 through 40 = New Rank 4
- Ranks 41 through 50 = New Rank 5
- Ranks 51 through 66 = New Rank 6

The charts on page 9 provide the revised income levels/caps per rank and a display of the income spreads per rank, adjusted for family size. From a spread of only \$47 per month (family of two) in the current system, there would be an income spread of \$469 per month between each of the ranks with family size of two. Just as the income spread increases with increased family size in the current system, so it will with collapsed ranks. Because rank 6 would incorporate more of the current rankings (16 ranks collapsed into 1, as opposed to 10 ranks as in each of collapsed ranks 1 through 5), the income spread would be broader in rank 6 (\$657 per month more than rank 5 for a family of two).

Along with the collapsed ranks, it is strongly recommended that family records appear on search lists by application date within each rank. This is much easier to explain to

families. Once rank is determined by income and family size, then the opportunity for being contacted for enrollment is based on when the family registered for the CEL.

These recommended changes should in no way affect parent fees as they are determined by actual income and not by a family's rank on the CEL.

Improved Outcomes for Families and Contractors/ Centralized Eligibility List Users

The previous recommendations will help in simplifying a very complex system. Specifically, they address the identified problems in these ways:

- There will be fewer errors in ranking families based on the income reported by the family. Because the differences in income between one rank and another are at least \$469/month (for a family of two), there is much less chance that a family record receive a ranking in error based on the income reported by the family. This helps contractors to more easily identify and enroll eligible families.
- Collapsing the ranks to create broader income bands will help parents better understand eligibility and priorities. With only six ranks, where the difference in income between each rank is at least \$469 per month, it is easier to explain to families why they would be in one rank as opposed to another. For the most part, families in rank 1 will have significantly lower income than families in rank 2, rank 2 families will have significantly less income than rank 3, etc.
- The new rank 1 includes families that are truly low-income. Families of two cannot earn more than \$891 per month; a family of four cannot earn more than \$1061. These new income parameters are a fair and accurate gauge of true need and will help discourage families from reporting unrealistically low incomes in order to be in the first rank, as is happening now (See #1). This will result in a smoother enrollment process.
- Collapsed ranks will assist contractors to identify and enroll a greater proportion of very low-income working families who will remain enrolled. The new ranking system will help level the playing field between working families and those seeking work in accessing and maintaining subsidized child care and development services. This assists contractors in fully earning their contracts.
- Enabling more low-income working families to be prioritized as rank 1 will ensure that more children are attending CDE-funded programs on a more consistent basis. Consistent attendance is critical if contractors are to fully earn their contracts and if children are to fully benefit from the quality program provided.

The following charts illustrate the policy principles described in this text:

- CHART I: Income Spread Between Current Ranks
- CHART II: Income Ceilings for Recommended Collapsed Ranks
- CHART III: Income Spread Between Collapsed Ranks

Chart I: Income Spread Between Current Ranks							
Ranks	Family Size						
	1-2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	\$ 47	\$ 50	\$ 56	\$ 64	\$ 74	\$ 75	\$ 77
2	\$ 47	\$ 50	\$ 56	\$ 64	\$ 73	\$ 76	\$ 77
3	\$ 47	\$ 50	\$ 56	\$ 64	\$ 74	\$ 75	\$ 77
4	\$ 47	\$ 50	\$ 56	\$ 64	\$ 74	\$ 75	\$ 77
5	\$ 47	\$ 50	\$ 56	\$ 64	\$ 74	\$ 75	\$ 77
6	\$ 47	\$ 50	\$ 56	\$ 64	\$ 74	\$ 75	\$ 77
7-66	\$ 47	\$ 50	\$ 56	\$ 64	\$ 74	\$ 75	\$ 77

Chart II: Income Ceilings for Recommended Collapsed Ranks											
New Ranks	Family Size										
	1-2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	\$ 891	\$ 955	\$ 1,061	\$ 1,231	\$ 1,400	\$ 1,432	\$ 1,464	\$ 1,496	\$ 1,528	\$ 1,559	\$ 1,591
2	\$ 1,360	\$ 1,457	\$ 1,619	\$ 1,878	\$ 2,137	\$ 2,186	\$ 2,234	\$ 2,283	\$ 2,332	\$ 2,380	\$ 2,429
3	\$ 1,829	\$ 1,960	\$ 2,178	\$ 2,526	\$ 2,874	\$ 2,940	\$ 3,005	\$ 3,070	\$ 3,136	\$ 3,201	\$ 3,266
4	\$ 2,298	\$ 2,462	\$ 2,736	\$ 3,174	\$ 3,611	\$ 3,693	\$ 3,775	\$ 3,858	\$ 3,940	\$ 4,022	\$ 4,104
5	\$ 2,767	\$ 2,965	\$ 3,294	\$ 3,821	\$ 4,348	\$ 4,447	\$ 4,546	\$ 4,645	\$ 4,744	\$ 4,842	\$ 4,941
6	\$ 3,518	\$ 3,769	\$ 4,188	\$ 4,858	\$ 5,528	\$ 5,653	\$ 5,779	\$ 5,904	\$ 6,030	\$ 6,156	\$ 6,281

Chart III: Income Spread Between Collapsed Ranks							
Ranks	Family Size						
	1-2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	\$ 469	\$ 502	\$ 558	\$ 647	\$ 737	\$ 754	\$ 770
2	\$ 469	\$ 503	\$ 559	\$ 648	\$ 737	\$ 754	\$ 771
3	\$ 469	\$ 502	\$ 558	\$ 648	\$ 737	\$ 753	\$ 770
4	\$ 469	\$ 503	\$ 558	\$ 47	\$ 737	\$ 754	\$ 771
5	\$ 751	\$ 804	\$ 894	\$ 1037	\$ 1,180	\$ 1,206	\$ 1,233

B. PARENT PROGRAM PREFERENCES

There are various program types available to families once on the CEL, depending on the family's eligibility and need (e.g. before/after school child care, Family Child Care Home Education Networks, center-based child care, APPs, full-day preschool, and part-day preschool).

Currently, the CEL allows the California State Preschool Programs (CSPP) to filter all children who are three or four-years old for its program, which provides the contractor a list of families who just want a preschool program, whether full day or part-day. However, the system does not currently allow filtering of children based on the family's preferred program type, such as center-based child care or APPs. The APP typically is where the family chooses the provider for their child(ren) and the provider is reimbursed on behalf of the parent. Not all program types appropriately address the needs or schedules for all families.

Issues

In most CEL applications, families can state a preferred program or preferred agency, but this preference does not prohibit families' records from being displayed on any list for any agency or program type for which the families/children are eligible. Those families who know specifically which program type they want for their children should be able to choose only that particular program and be contacted only by the agencies that hold contracts for those particular programs. The following issues are noted:

- There are some families whose circumstances are such that they will accept only one type of subsidized child care and development service. For example, a parent who works day-into-evening hours would likely rely on license-exempt providers. This parent would have a difficult time trying to use center-based care (i.e. General Child Care and Development Programs (CCTR) and CSPP) and may only want to be considered for APP. However, the family/child record will display on lists pulled for any and all types of subsidized programs. This can be very frustrating for the parent if they are contacted with any frequency and have to explain what they are waiting for.
- Contractors trying to fill vacancies quickly may contact many families who do not want the type of care they are offering because they are waiting for a call from a particular type of program (e.g. APP). Staff would have to make numerous phone calls to find one or two families that actually want their program type. This delays enrollments and negatively affects the ability of the program to fully earn its contracted maximum reimbursable rate (MRA).
- In this process of contacting many families to find a few, contractors are continually sending families back to the CEL because the family did not want

their particular program type. The family/child's record may continue to be displayed on future lists because the family is still eligible and not yet enrolled.

- Contractors report having to go over dozens (sometimes hundreds) of records that they have already contacted and where the parent has stated they are not interested. Even if a call is not made, there is a great deal of staff time spent sorting through those records previously contacted to find the un-contacted records. This extra time and work may delay enrollments and negatively affects the ability of a program to fully earn its contract.

Recommendations

In order to address the concerns listed above and create a more efficient system for matching eligible families with appropriate care opportunities, it is recommended that CEL systems include a function that allows families to choose their preferred program type by excluding themselves from searches for other program types (when they know which specific program fits their needs best). This will allow contractors to register families using this preference/exclusion function after families have been informed of all the program options available to them. Agencies can search for families using the preference/exclusion function as long as resulting lists reflect the current eligibility and priority rules applied to the pool of children/families who have stated they are seeking the specific program type offered by the contractor.

If a family has not stated a preference, then the preference/exclusion function does not apply to that record. These records would display based on searches for any type of program for which they are eligible. Families who have stated preference would be able to change or eliminate the stated preference at any time. For example, if a family knows specifically that they only want an APP to contact them for services when funding is available, the family states a preference for APP and the record is then marked so that it will not be included in any searches for CSPP or CCTR. Thus, the only type of program calling the parent will be an APP agency. Likewise, the APP agency staff knows that when they pull a list from the CEL using the preference/exclusion function, they will have a list of families who specifically stated that they wanted APP. They are apt to spend much less time sorting through the list or making contact with families who do not want their type of program.

Improved Outcomes for Families and Contractors/ Centralized Eligibility List Users

These recommended changes can help in simplifying a very complex system. Specifically, they address the identified problems listed above in the following ways:

- There will be more families listed on program search lists from CEL who actually want that program type, which will help eliminate families from repeated calls by agencies who cannot provide the type of service the family is seeking.
- Contractors will be able to more easily fill their vacancies when they know that the records on the resulting search list have already indicated a preference for the contractor's type of program. This will positively affect the program's ability to earn the contract's MRA.
- If a contractor has to search multiple times to fill all vacancies, they will not spend time going over records they had already contacted and returned based on the families turning down the offer of care. This will mean more rapid enrollments and a better chance to fully earn the contract's MRA.

C. PARENT PREPARATION AND INFORMATION

The system of subsidized child care and development as it has evolved in California is extremely complex. Parents seeking child care support or early education opportunities for their children are often confused by the various options, requirements, timelines, and limitations. To begin with, there are the various program/contract types, not all of which are available or appropriate for all families. Then there are the rules about eligibility and how to certify eligibility.

Issues

Bringing together the complexities of the subsidized system with very low-income parents, who may be under-educated and certainly under a great deal of daily stress, may often lead to confusion, frustration, and lack of follow through to actual enrollment. The following issues are noted:

- Parents seeking subsidized care may only be aware of the neighborhood center and usually do not know of all program options available to them. Many parents are not given an explanation of what the CEL is and how it connects them with many programs that might have openings for their children. Moreover, when they apply at the one location they know, but get a call from a completely different agency or program, they are confused and may not respond. This means that contractors may have to contact dozens of families before they get a positive response, thus delaying filling vacancies.
- When a program contacts the parent to come in and enroll, many families don't realize how important it is to respond immediately. They may set aside the notice to deal with immediate crises and then lose their opportunities to access care. Often the parent will make an appointment but doesn't appear at the appointed day and time and does not call to inform the agency or reschedule. This type of response delays enrollment and makes it difficult for the contractor to earn their full MRA.
- Even though program staff informs parents of what is needed when they are contacted to come in to enroll, many families do not have immediate access to the appropriate documentation or have not collected documentation over a period of time to be ready. For example, agencies may require pay stubs for a few months to be certain of the average income and the family does not keep their pay stubs. Families may wait to enroll until they have the documents which delays the enrollment and impedes programs from earning the full MRA.
- Certain categories of parents, including teen parents, may require more assistance to follow through with all enrollment procedures. Despite the fact that families with the lowest incomes have highest priority and are usually the first

contacted, they also are the most likely not to respond or to follow through. These families also may be the most transient, and because of their very low incomes, tend to face many crises that result from a lack of resources. Research regarding enrollment patterns indicates that while lowest income families are enrolled in large numbers, the proportion of all enrolled families is smaller than would be expected.

Recommendations

CEL administrators have developed many communication materials and used various communication strategies to inform families about the CEL. Some have begun to include information about program choices and requirements. The following is a list of best practices that can be employed to minimize the problems arising from the circumstances described above:

- Inform families, preferably often and in different media, of the various program types that are available to them so they are aware of the different options.
- Communicate the names of agencies and programs to families so they become more familiar with the various organizations providing care in their areas.
- At the time of registration on the CEL, provide the parents with a list of documents that they need to gather in order to be ready to enroll.
- Work with community partners such as health and social service agencies to disseminate information about the CEL and to help families prepare for and respond to the invitations to enroll.
- Take the time to educate parents about the system and what is required when contact with the family occurs for registration or updating records.
- Conduct monthly orientations for families who are on the CEL, in which staff explain to applicants how the CEL works and distribute information on the types of programs in the community and the documents needed to be collected by the parent in preparation for enrollment.

Improved Outcomes for Families and Contractors/ Centralized Eligibility List Users

In general, the practices described above should result in a population of eligible families who are aware of their choices and understand their responsibilities in accessing CDE-funded child care and development services. More knowledgeable parents will likely:

- Be more responsive to invitations to enroll.
- Arrive for scheduled appointments or call to reschedule.
- Be prepared with all the documentation required to document eligibility and to enroll.
- Be more consistent in following through with enrollment and attendance.

All of these behaviors will assist contractors in fully enrolling and in maintaining enrollment in order to fully earn the MRA.

D. DATA INTEGRITY AND SYSTEM CHECKS

Each county has the option of either developing their own CEL software system or purchasing a system through a vendor as long as the selected system complies with CDD regulations and the CEL Data Dictionary. In addition, counties are given the flexibility to develop methods, policies, and procedures for administering and managing the CEL specific to their local community needs. A wide range of models exist throughout the state amongst counties for entering and maintaining family and child data on the CEL. Due to the diversity of systems and procedures statewide, the creation of a more uniform (universal) delivery system, which includes establishing policies that ensure minimum standards of data integrity and system checks, has been discussed.

Issues

The following issues are noted:

- Inaccurate information may be entered. Some systems allow multiple people to add applications to the database, such as staff at the CEL Administrator's level, CDD contractor staff, and families through an online process. While this is an expeditious way to get the information into the CEL, it is not always the most accurate way. Spelling or typographical errors occur, and needed information is often omitted. This means that errors are created from the start. The errors can impede locating family records, limit a family's eligibility, make it difficult to identify families for enrollment, and distort data reporting to CDD as is required of the CEL Administrator.
- Long search lists are created. CDD contractors pull from the CEL database according to the type of contract for which they are trying to fill a vacancy. The CEL is automatically designed to prioritize the children eligible for the specific type of contract. Therefore, a child could possibly be on several contract lists based on their eligibility and need criteria. CDD contractors contact parents from these lists and often find only a few eligible children. This can be very time-consuming.
- Family record information may be outdated. CEL Administrators' staffing may range from a single person to several staff assisting with updating the CEL system. It depends on the county and their funding allocation. CEL information can become outdated very quickly, as a large portion of the population registered on the CEL are families who move quite frequently or do not have permanent housing. Again, data that is not up-to-date impedes identifying families for enrollment.
- Users of CEL lack knowledge of the database system. CDD contractor staff who are assigned to have knowledge and understanding of how to properly utilize the

CEL system in their county receive training from the CEL Administrator. However, there are some users who may receive training through other users, where crucial information regarding how to properly utilize the system may be lost or omitted. In addition, some counties may not have systems in place to perform technical assistance for each user on an ongoing basis. Inconsistently trained users are more apt to make mistakes in entering and updating records, and in using the search functions appropriately. All of this impedes the timely enrollment of eligible families.

Recommendations

In order to address the concerns listed above we recommend that all CEL systems establish the following system functions or procedures:

- Create a system check for all information that is required from data dictionary and to determine eligibility/need. Examples include:
 - Cross reference checks for matching city and zip code
 - Format for date (mm/dd/yyyy)
 - Format for phone (999-999-9999)
 - System check for zero income

Best Practice

Build into the software system:

- Drop down boxes with preset selections
- Configurable fields in which the CEL administrator can preset city and zip code groups
- Consistent formatting for dates and numbers
- Standard queries for systems checks

At a Minimum

- Allow access for CEL administrators to the “raw data” to check for data entry errors and inconsistencies in formatting
- Create a “systems check” handbook for CEL administrators specific to the software program being used
- Create a method by which all incoming applications can be previewed by CEL Administrator staff in a timely manner prior to activation on the CEL.

Best Practice

Develop an on-line application that will automatically populate the specific software system being used with parent and child information. The parent and child record will remain inactive until reviewed by the CEL administrator for accuracy. Best practice would be to review incoming applications on a weekly basis.

At a Minimum

All applications added by a CEL user and/or family will allow children seeking services to appear on the CEL immediately; however, at the same time, the incoming applications will be listed in a report/query where the CEL administrator and its staff can review the applications for accuracy and follow up with family if needed in a timely manner.

- Create a communication system to immediately notify the CEL Administrator staff or establish a flag for the record for CEL Administrator to follow up. This will enable the CEL Administrator to clean up records in a timely way that should not be available during searches.

Best Practice

Create a way, such as a CEL Administrator's group email address, that will facilitate immediate notification to CEL Administrator of family records encountered by contractors whereby families:

- No longer need services
- All phone numbers are not working/connected
- Have a long history of not returning calls/not showing up to appointments
- Have a child that has already been enrolled

At a Minimum

Put a flag in place for contractors to indicate the above information has been found and an ongoing report is generated by this flag for CEL Administrator and its staff to follow up.

- Update any records quarterly that have not been updated in three (3) months by either sending a postcard/letter to family or calling for updated information. If there is no contact from a family within thirty (30) days, the family record can be

inactivated/archived. This practice will help to cull outdated records and minimize the records of families that cannot be contacted during a search for enrollments.

Best Practice

- Identify and work with a local printer who can print update postcards, address the postcards and mail out using CEL administrator's bulk mail account.
- On a monthly basis, CEL administrator will send a mailing list directly to the printer containing names of families who have not updated in three (3) months.
- Build into the CEL software system an automatic inactivation function with timer to be used with records of families being sent an update postcard.

At a Minimum

- Generate a monthly report of all families ranked 1–10 who have not been updated in three (3) months and call family to update; or
- Perform monthly "targeted updates" in line with peak enrollment periods of CEL Users/Contractors. For example, a CDD contractor is enrolling for CSPP, ages 3-4 in a specific geographic area. The month before enrollment activities are to begin, generate a list of families with 3-4 years olds in the specific geographic area who have not updated within three (3) months and call or send update postcard to the families.
- CEL Administrator and/or its staff are to provide training and establish a system of on-going technical assistance

Best Practice

- CEL Administrator staff conduct all CEL trainings for new CDD contractor staff who are assigned to utilize CEL. This will ensure that all CEL users are competent in using the system before they begin, which will minimize errors in entering and searching for data. It will also ensure that CEL users are appropriately informed about local policies and procedures related to CEL operations.
- CEL Administrator will conduct regularly scheduled group trainings via teleconferencing, webinars, and/or in person.

- CEL Administrator will assign a dedicated staff person to provide phone assistance and re-trainings.
- Frequently asked questions will be set up on the county's CEL Web site.
- The CEL Web site also will have videos and/or PowerPoints of trainings that were conducted via tele-conferencing and/or webinars.
- Post latest procedure manual on CEL Web site for users to download.

At a Minimum

- At the time a user name and password is assigned to a new CEL user, the CEL administrator will set up a one-on-one training to review CEL policies and procedures as well as train the new user on how to use the CEL system to generate lists of eligible families.
- A procedure manual will be created and kept updated and made available to each CEL user.

Improved Outcomes for Families and Contractors/ Centralized Eligibility List Users

These recommended changes can assist in ensuring that a very complex system contains accurate and quality information. Accurate data supports the efficiency of the system which in turn assists both contractors in enrolling and families in being correctly identified for enrollment. Specifically, it addresses the identified problems listed above in the following ways:

- Necessary information entered into the CEL database will have system checks and validations in place to ensure accuracy and completeness. This will alleviate inaccurate information that is important for eligibility determination and enrollment from being entered.
- Long search lists on the CEL often contain records with outdated information which is identified by the contractors who are trying to contact the families for potential services (such as phone numbers not working, family no longer needs services, or child is enrolled). To have a communication system in place, whether a flag or immediate notification to CEL Administrator and its staff will ensure a more rapid clean-up of outdated records resulting in cleaner and more efficient lists from which the contractors can work to enroll new families.
- Quarterly updating of all records that have not been touched or updated by any contractor or CEL Administrator and its staff in three (3) months will more

consistently eliminate records that are outdated, making searches to enroll more effective. Additional updating practices as described will further support the goal of an efficient and accurate data base.

- Insisting that CEL Administrators and/or staff are the sole trainers for all CEL users will ensure consistency in training and result in users who are confident and knowledgeable in regards to the utilization of the system and less likely to make errors in data entry.
- Ongoing technical assistance should result in consistency and accuracy in CEL use, and will ensure that CEL users are aware of any new procedural features/changes from the CDD in regards to the operation of CEL. A well-trained and supported user of the CEL system would result in more accurate data being entered, as well as ensuring maximum use of the information contained in the CEL database as intended by the legislation that established the CEL.