Executive Summary

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Helping to Enhance Parents’ Potential (CalHEPP) program is a home visitation program designed for CalWORKs parents with children ages 0 to 5. CalHEPP home visitation educators work to strengthen parents’ job readiness and financial management skills so that they are able to support themselves and their young children and achieve self-sufficiency. CalHEPP is fully funded by the San Joaquin County Human Services Agency, and replicates the First 5 San Joaquin Home Visitation Initiative’s program delivery model. In FY 2016-2017, CalHEPP services were offered by three agencies, all of whom were CalWORKs case management providers as well as experienced First 5 San Joaquin home visitation providers.

This report presents key findings from an evaluation of CalHEPP’s implementation and impact during Fiscal Year (FY) 2016-2017. The purpose of the evaluation was to examine the changes that families made with regards to job readiness, financial management, and engagement in early literacy activities. It also explored the steps that First 5 San Joaquin is taking to strengthen program implementation. Key findings and recommendations from this evaluation include:

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<th>Key Finding</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
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<td>Job skills and job readiness</td>
<td>Continue to support parents to find employment by engaging CalHEPP educators in Employment Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (EWORKs) training.</td>
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<td>Financial management</td>
<td>Continue to support parents in financial management strategies that were less likely to be used, such as writing goals and checking eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit.</td>
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<td>Early literacy</td>
<td>Continue encouraging families to build early literacy by visiting the library and participating in activities offered by programs such as Talk. Read. Sing. Draw. Play.</td>
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<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Continue to strengthen program implementation through enhanced outreach, training, and ongoing communication.</td>
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Background

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Helping to Enhance Parents’ Potential (CalHEPP) program is a home visitation program designed for parents with children ages 0 to 5 who are enrolled in CalWORKs, California’s public assistance and cash aid program. CalHEPP is a collaboration between First 5 San Joaquin and the San Joaquin County Human Services Agency (HSA) CalWORKs program, supporting CalWORKs families with young children through services that strengthen their job search and job readiness skills, financial management knowledge, early literacy engagement, and health and nutrition practices. CalHEPP parents participate in:

- Weekly home visits with CalHEPP educators that include job readiness guidance; financial management and health education lessons; and family literacy activities;
- Parent workshops and family learning events, including playgroups;
- Comprehensive developmental screenings and referrals; and
- Referrals to other support services, including Women, Infants and Children (WIC), CalFresh, and other community programs.

This report presents key findings from an evaluation of CalHEPP’s implementation and impact during FY 2016-2017, the program’s first full year in operation. The evaluation examined the extent to which parents made progress with regards to job readiness, financial management, and engagement in family literacy activities. The evaluation also explored the steps that First 5 San Joaquin is taking to strengthen program implementation. Findings are informed by parent surveys; interviews with CalHEPP, CalWORKs, and First 5 San Joaquin staff; the First 5 San Joaquin Client and Service Database; and the CalWORKs C-IV database. For a full description of evaluation methods, please refer to the Technical Appendix.

A note about the data

In some cases, data presented reflect change over time that requires both pre- and post- program survey completion for analyses. In general, there is a lower response rate for the post-program surveys. This is due, in part, to the high proportion of families who exit CalHEPP prior to the completion of the program because they have gained employment and therefore no longer receive cash aid. As a result, the number of participants varies across analyses and is relatively low in comparison to the number of individuals who participated in CalHEPP.
Evaluation Findings

A total of 164 parents and 172 children participated in CalHEPP in FY 2016-2017. On average, families were enrolled in CalHEPP for 4.6 months. Findings presented in this report reflect data on job readiness, financial management, and engagement in family literacy activities.

The racial and ethnic composition of CalHEPP participants is distinct from other First 5 San Joaquin programs

Due to CalWORKs eligibility requirements, the demographics of CalHEPP participants are distinct from other First 5 San Joaquin programs. Compared to First 5 San Joaquin overall, CalHEPP serves a higher proportion of African American parents (27 percent versus 10 percent) and White parents (23 percent versus 15 percent), and a lower proportion of Hispanic/Latino parents (38 percent versus 57 percent) and Asian/Pacific Islander parents (3 percent versus 12 percent). The majority (92 percent) of parents spoke English as a primary language. Similarly, CalHEPP serves a higher proportion of African American and White parents than the First 5 San Joaquin Home Visitation Initiative, and a lower proportion of Hispanic/Latino parents.

Exhibit 1. Race/ethnicity of CalHEPP parents (n=164) compared to First 5 San Joaquin overall and First 5 San Joaquin Home Visitation Initiative

After participating in CalHEPP, over half of parents found employment and the majority were more confident in their job readiness skills

CalHEPP educators offer guidance to parents to develop job readiness and job search skills that can help them build their financial self-sufficiency. According to data from the CalWORKs C-IV database, a majority (57 percent) of the 155 families who completed CalHEPP were employed by the end of the fiscal year. As shown in Exhibit 2 on the next page, this includes 27 percent who were still receiving cash aid but reported new earnings from employment, and 30 percent with earnings high enough that their CalWORKs cash aid case was closed.
The proportion of families that no longer receive CalWORKs cash aid due to employment—30 percent—was nearly twice that of families with young children receiving CalWORKs cash aid that did not participate in CalHEPP (16 percent). As one parent said, "CalHEPP helped me to become full-time [employed] and manage ways to still spend [time] with my child."

**Exhibit 2. Employment among CalHEPP participants who completed CalHEPP in FY 2016-2017, CalWORKs C-IV Database (n=155)**

Furthermore, the majority of parents reported feeling better prepared to look for and maintain employment. After participating, 84 percent of CalHEPP parents had an up-to-date resume, 86 percent felt they had the support and resources needed to meet their employment goals, and 92 percent felt confident in their ability to search for job openings. "[My CalHEPP health educator] helped me in so many ways!" said one participant. "She gave me confidence to job hunt. She helped me make a resume, taught me to fill out an application and overall became a friend."

**Exhibit 3. Job skills and job readiness among CalHEPP participants who completed the CalHEPP post-survey (n=53)**

To continue to support parents to increase their job readiness skills and find employment, First 5 San Joaquin staff suggested engaging CalHEPP educators in EWORKs (Employment Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids) training. Strengthening connections between CalHEPP and EWORKs may improve the quality of job readiness/job skills information that educators can provide to CalHEPP families.
Participants improved money management habits

CalHEPP home visits include lessons from the *Making Every Dollar Count* curriculum. This curriculum, developed by the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) and delivered in partnership with First 5 San Joaquin, focuses on ways to manage family finances. Four out of five participants reported that these lessons helped improve their use of resources, such as saving money on food and making food last (Exhibit 4). Parents specifically mentioned appreciating the program’s emphasis on simple ways to save money, such as using coupons. One participant shared that “I never took time to learn or even try to use coupons to save; I have already started and have saved already.”

Participants also reported greater awareness of other community resources they could access in times of need, including WIC, food banks, child care, or programs that support children with special needs. More than three-quarters of participants (78 percent) reported they had identified resources to use if needed.

To a lesser extent, participants felt that the program helped them take steps towards financial planning by writing personal goals, checking Earned Income Tax Credit eligibility, and putting money into savings (Exhibit 4). While CalHEPP staff noted that saving money may not be a realistic outcome for program participants, continuing to provide support in other areas that were less likely to be used by parents—such as writing goals, checking eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit, and using available resources to help with basic essentials—may help families strengthen their financial management skills.

Exhibit 4. Use or intended use of money management skills among *Making Every Dollar Count* survey respondents (n=117)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Plan to</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used one easy way to save on food</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made your food last until you have money to buy more</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrote a personal goal</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checked Earned Income Tax Credit eligibility</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put money into savings</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CalHEPP families are reading to their children more frequently and have more books in their home

CalHEPP educators incorporate activities into their home visits that encourage early literacy, such as UCCE’s *Let’s Read Together* curriculum that gives parents hands-on practice reading with their children, as well as Raising a Reader (RAR), a national literacy program that increased families’ access to books through weekly book bag delivery and connections to local libraries.

Parents in CalHEPP reported reading to their child more often after participating in the program. As shown in Exhibit 5 (next page), the percent of parents reading to their children five or more days per week increased from 37 percent to 64 percent.

“I never took time to learn or even try to use coupons to save; I have already started and have saved already.”

—CalHEPP participant
Exhibit 5. Frequency of reading to children before and after participation among family literacy survey respondents (n=36)

The number of children’s books in participants’ homes—a key marker of the home educational environment—also increased; 37 percent of parents reported having more than 10 books in their home before the program, and 64 percent reported this after the program (Exhibit 6). This may reflect participation in Raising a Reader, with families participating in an average of 13 book bag exchanges during the program. Importantly, the portion of families reporting no books in their home dropped from 11 percent to just three percent.

Exhibit 6. Number of books in the home before and after participation, among family literacy survey respondents (n=36)

To continue to encourage families to participate in early literacy activities, CalHEPP educators may want to explore additional engagement strategies. Potential strategies include emphasizing connections to local libraries, and connecting families to other programs and activities such as the Read to Me Stockton! program and the Talk. Read. Sing. Draw. Play campaign.
First 5 San Joaquin adjusted the CalHEPP curriculum, enrollment process, and training to improve implementation

As a result of ongoing reflection and mid-year evaluation findings, CalHEPP has adjusted program implementation to strengthen services in future years. Changes to the CalHEPP program over the last year include:

- **Reorganizing the CalHEPP curriculum to provide maximum exposure to financial management resources.** The CalHEPP curriculum includes lessons on health education, financial management, and child development. To respond to the specific needs of CalWORKs families, the curriculum was reorganized so lessons on financial management occur at the beginning of the program. This ensures that participating families receive maximum exposure to this component of the program.

- **Improving the outreach process to serve more families.** Outreach to eligible CalWORKs families has been enhanced by marketing materials that clearly communicate the benefits of participation, as well as a new process that allows CalHEPP staff to reach out directly to eligible CalWORKs families. Furthermore, CalHEPP’s positive reputation has resulted in word-of-mouth referrals between CalWORKs families. One CalWORKs staff person said “I think the word is getting out that [CalWORKs families] can have someone help them with their children [and] make a nutrition and budget plan...[CalHEPP] is being perceived as a good thing.”

- **Increasing CalHEPP staff availability.** CalWORKs staff report that CalHEPP educators have been able to better accommodate participants’ schedules, including adding some flexibility to their hours and being willing to offer visits at locations outside the home. At the same time, CalWORKs staff note that other CalWORKs requirements—as well as both family obligations, like child care schedules, and challenging circumstances, such as unstable housing or homelessness—still pose a barrier to ongoing participation.

- **Expanding CalHEPP’s reach to families exempt from Welfare-to-Work.** Earlier this year CalHEPP began targeted outreach to families with children 0 to 5 who are exempt from Welfare-to-Work. Families can be exempt from Welfare-to-Work for a number of reasons, including being pregnant, under 19 and in school, or caring for a child 24 months of age or younger. Many of these CalWORKs participants fall within the target demographic for CalHEPP, and may have more time to participate because they do not have Welfare-to-Work participation requirements.

- **Working to improve communication.** CalWORKs, CalHEPP, and First 5 San Joaquin staff all reported improved ability to communicate with each other, contributing to smoother program implementation. As one person shared, “once everyone knew who everyone was, it was easier for [someone to ask] ‘Can you send one of your staff out?’ because he now knows who that was.”

“I think the word is getting out that CalWORKs families can have someone help them with their children and make a nutrition and budget plan. CalHEPP is being perceived as a good thing.”

–CalHEPP staff
First 5 San Joaquin staff, CalWORKs staff, and CalHEPP staff identified additional opportunities to improve implementation, including:

- Continuing to encourage regular communication between CalWORKs and CalHEPP staff;
- Continuing to develop and disseminate outreach materials that are simple, clear, and compelling to both CalWORKs staff and CalWORKs families;
- Exploring ways to enroll families that are typically hard to reach (such as homeless families), and adding elements that can keep families engaged and active in the program (such as group meetings or workshops); and
- Complementing First 5 San Joaquin’s quarterly home visitor learning exchanges with exchanges that focus specifically on CalHEPP staff and their clients.

Looking ahead

Currently, CalHEPP and First 5 San Joaquin are exploring ways to expand CalHEPP’s reach to more families in the county. For example, First 5 San Joaquin, CalHEPP, and CalWORKs staff note that CalHEPP would be more appealing to Welfare-to-Work families if the program satisfied Welfare-to-Work requirements. As one staff member shared, case managers “understand what’s in it for [participants]—growing with their children, helping them to develop a little bit more, and giving them tools and ideas—[CalWORKs participants] don’t see it that way. They see [CalHEPP] more as taking up their time and they’re not getting anything for it.” Allowing CalHEPP participation to satisfy Welfare-to-Work requirements might increase CalWORKs participants’ interest in the program. While this determination is outside their immediate jurisdiction, First 5 San Joaquin is pursuing policy efforts that may address this barrier.

In addition to these efforts at the policy level, First 5 San Joaquin added the Protective Factors Survey to its evaluation in July 2017. This survey focuses on key protective factors that contribute to family resiliency, including social support, knowledge of parenting, family functioning, and nurturing behaviors. By monitoring outcomes related to these protective factors, CalHEPP may help to broaden the discussion about activities that contribute to success for CalWORKs families.

Finally, First 5 San Joaquin is examining opportunities for sustainable funding. The First 5 San Joaquin Commission has met with policy makers, legislative advocates, and other First 5 Commissions (including First 5 Los Angeles) to pursue sustainable funding for programs like CalHEPP that support the resiliency of CalWORKs families in the community. Continuing to monitor and communicate policy and regulatory opportunities will expand opportunities for additional CalWORKs families to participate.
Summary and key recommendations

CalHEPP has seen numerous early successes during its first full year of implementation. Families who participated in CalHEPP increased job readiness, gained employment, and acquired skills critical for achieving self-sufficiency for themselves and their families. Spurred by these early successes, First 5 San Joaquin and its partner organizations are working together to continue improving the model and identify ways to ensure its sustainability.

Key recommendations for the future include:

- Continuing to support parents in their job searches by engaging CalHEPP educators in Employment Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (EWORKs) training;

- Continuing to develop parents’ financial management skills, including those that were less likely to be used by participants, such as writing goals and checking eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit;

- Encouraging families to build on early literacy practices in the home by visiting the library, participating in activities offered by programs such as Talk. Read. Sing. Draw. Play., and benefiting from other community programs such as Read to Me, Stockton!; and

- Supporting ongoing improvements to implementation through strategies such as enhanced outreach, training, and ongoing communication between agencies.
Technical Appendix

Additional information on CalHEPP

In FY 2016-2017, three contractors received funding to implement the CalHEPP program:

- Family Resource and Referral Center
- Lao Khmu Association
- El Concilio

CalHEPP is fully funded by the San Joaquin County Human Services Agency. Total funding for the program in FY 2016-2017 was $540,628.

Families are eligible to participate in the CalHEPP program for up to six months, and receive up to four home visits per month. CalHEPP educators focus on equipping parents with job search and job readiness skills throughout the course of their participation. This component of CalHEPP is tailored to the specific needs of each parent, and can include supports such as resume review, interview preparation, coaching to identify career goals, or connections to job openings.

In addition to working on job readiness skills, CalHEPP educators also implement the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Health Education curricula. The Health Education curricula include:

- *Making Every Dollar Count* (MEDC), eight lessons focused on managing financial resources.
- *Healthy Happy Families*, five lessons focused on healthy habits and raising healthy children. CalHEPP educators can select the five lessons most applicable to a participating family.
- *Let’s Read Together*, four lessons that provide parents with hands-on practice reading with their children. CalHEPP educators can select the four most applicable lessons for a participating family. This is offered in conjunction with Raising a Reader, a national program that provides weekly book bag deliveries and connects families with local libraries.

Methods

This evaluation report includes data from the following sources:

- **Client and Service Database.** Each First 5 San Joaquin CalHEPP provider uses this database to gather client demographic and service information for participating families. A total of 164 parents received CalHEPP services during FY 2016-2017. This includes clients who may not have received all CalHEPP services, as well as those who may not have been enrolled long enough to complete any of the below evaluation tools.

- **CalWORKs C-IV Database.** First 5 San Joaquin examined data in the CalWORKs C-IV database to understand the percent of CalHEPP participants who exited CalHEPP before the end of FY 2016-2017 (n=155) with either new reported earnings, or closed CalWORKs cases due to employment. Additionally, First 5 San Joaquin submitted an ad hoc request to San Joaquin County Human Services Agency to examine case closure
due to employment among all FY 2016-2017 CalWORKs participants with children ages 0 to 5 (n=1,661).

- **CalHEPP pre- and post-program survey (n=53 matched).** The CalHEPP pre-program survey (n=102) asks CalHEPP participants about their current employment status, as well as any specific challenges or ways that the CalHEPP program can help them to meet their goals. The CalHEPP post-program survey (n=54) asks CalHEPP participants about their job skills and job readiness before and after the program. Surveys are available in English and Spanish.

  Data in this newsletter focus on job skills and job readiness data, which is collected through the post-program survey. Therefore, this data may be more representative of the experience of families who complete the entire CalHEPP curriculum.

- **Family literacy pre- and post-program surveys (n=36 matched).** This survey assesses the frequency of participation in family literacy activities. Parents completed family literacy surveys at intake and after they complete the six-month literacy program. Out of 164 families who participated, 80 completed the pre-program survey, and 46 completed the post-program survey. This report includes data from parents who completed both the pre- and post-program surveys. Low match rates are due in part to the large number of families who exit CalHEPP early due to closure of their cash assistance case. The majority of parents who completed the survey participated in CalHEPP for 4.6 months, which is representative of the average length of participation for CalHEPP participants as a whole. Surveys are available in English and Spanish.

- **Making Every Dollar Count (MEDC) retrospective survey (n=117).** Questions on this survey are related to changes in knowledge about budgeting, financial planning, and saving money. Participants responded to this survey after completing at least four out of five lessons related to money management and family finances (approximately 12 weeks after enrollment). Surveys are available in English and Spanish.

- **Interviews with First 5 San Joaquin, CalHEPP, and CalWORKs staff (n=4).** In October 2017, the evaluation team conducted semi-structured interviews with staff at First 5 San Joaquin, CalHEPP contracted agencies, and CalWORKs. These interviews followed up on qualitative data collected in January 2017 (focus groups and interviews with 14 CalHEPP and CalWORKs staff members), and therefore focused on changes to program implementation, outreach, and impact that had occurred during the interceding months. Transcripts from interviews were reviewed and analyzed for key themes.