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## ABSTRACT

This final report summarizes a six-year project, the Northern California Coalition, which sought to provide information and training to families within their communities and to increase the capacity of community-based parent groups. The coalition was a collaboration of three parent-directed agencies serving families of children with disabilities and resulted in services in 28 Northern California counties. The project actively involved parents in developing and conducting workshops, designing materials, and providing technical assistance to other parents and parent support groups. Parents served by the project came to understand their rights and protections under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; to better understand the nature of disabilities; the need for accommodations; and the role that special education plays in achieving educational goals. Parents also acquired skills needed for effective participation in educational planning for their children. A chart lists project goals, outcomes for 2001-02, total requirements under the grant, and the actual 6-year total. Also listed are other successes (including unexpected successes) such as a significant increase in services to previously unserved or underserved groups. Objectives not met successfully included the trainer of trainers program and lack of parent interest in training on conflict resolution. (DB)

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The Northern California Coalition (NCC) was a very successful program. It was a California Parent Training and Information Center comprised of Parents Helping Parents (PHP), Matrix, and Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF). NCC's 6-year project sought to provide information and training to families within their communities and to increase the capacity of community-based parent groups. Particular emphasis was placed upon addressing the needs of families who are underserved due to geographic and linguistic isolation as well as economic disadvantage and cultural barriers.

The NCC was a strong collaboration of three very successful parent directed agencies serving families of children with disabilities. This collaboration enabled the partners to have local support for our families throughout the 28 Northern California counties in our geographical region we served. Each agency was well established in its own community, had strong ties to its region and was extremely knowledgeable about the resources and supports for families and professionals in those areas.

The goals of the project were designed to promote the full participation of parents in the parent-educator partnership. In all activities parents were actively involved in developing and conducting workshops, designing materials, and providing technical assistance to parents and parent support groups. Within the scope of the project parents came to understand their rights and protections under IDEA, to better understand the nature of disabilities, the need for accommodations and the role special education played to achieve educational goals. Parents also acquired knowledge and the skills needed for effective participation in educational planning for their children. The NCC collaborative created a network of parent leaders who would provide information and training for families and professionals in their individual areas, thereby maximizing the partner's outreach and effectiveness.

During this grant period California receive a state improvement grant and accessed the parent to parent networks set up by the California Parent Training and Information Centers. The California State Improvement grant included a priority to increase participation of underserved families in decision-making at the local, state, and regional level and through the parent to parent network this priority was enhanced. Matrix coordinates the Family Participation Fund, provides stipend to enable families the opportunity to participate in these activities. Each partner was a recipient of a mini grant to work with underserved families in each region. In addition, PHP houses the RISE (Resources in Special Education) Library, which is the California Department of Education Comprehensive System of Personnel Development library. Because it is housed at a Parent Resource Center it has increased access of these materials for families and professionals statewide.

The original area served by the NCC ranged from over 100,000 square miles and include 36 of California's 58 counties, 23 of the 36 are rural counties. In 1995 there were 2,500,000 school age children in the NCC area. In 1999 a new PTI was formed in the far northern section of CA that became the PTI for 8 of the original 36 counties. Since 1999 NCC has served 28 counties with the total population of still more than about 2,000,000 school age children.

**Goals of the Grant were to:**

1. Provide parents, especially minority parents, with information and training to: a) know their rights and protections under IDEA that they may ensure improved education results; b) understand the nature of disability, the need for accommodations in special education to achieve educational goals; and c) provide access to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for effective participation in educational planning for their children with special needs.
2. Strengthen the network of parent leaders who will provide information and training to parents of children with disabilities in their communities throughout Northern California, especially in the regions that are underserved.
3. Provide parents, and those who work with parents, information and training to advance the education of students in the least restrictive environment.

**Our anticipated project results were:**

1. Better understanding of the nature and needs of the disabling conditions on their children with disabilities.
2. Provide follow-up support for the educational programs of their children with disabilities.
3. Communicate more effectively with special and regular educators, administrators, related services personnel, and other relevant professionals.
4. Participate fully in educational decision-making processes, including the development of the individualized education program, for a child with a disability.
5. Obtain information about the range of options, programs, services, and resources available to children with disabilities and their families at the national, State, and local levels.
6. Understand the provisions for educating children with disabilities under IDEA.

<b>Yearly Outcomes</b>	<b>Grant Totals For 01-02</b>	<b>Total Requirement for Grant</b>	<b>Actual 6 Year Total</b>
Outreach to parents and professionals	15,972 parents and professionals contacted	57,600 parents and professionals contacted	70,600 parents and professionals contacted
A quarterly news letter to 15,000 people	54,000 newsletters sent.	90,000 newsletters sent.	184,000 newsletters sent.
Create and distribute topical material will be distributed to 500 parents per year	3,502 materials distributed.	3,000 materials distributed.	17,150 materials distributed.

<b>Yearly Outcomes</b>	<b>Grant Totals For 01-02</b>	<b>Total for the 6 year Grant Cycle</b>	<b>Actual 6 Year Total</b>
Conduct 90 workshops a year for a minimum of 1,500 participants. 10 workshops a year in non-English language.	114 workshops 3,211  >18 workshops	540 workshops 9,000 participants  60 workshops	672 workshops 9,863 participants  >60 workshops
Increase core library by 50 materials a year	194 new materials	300 new materials	2,732 new materials
Conduct public awareness activities and presentations to reach parents and professionals.	>20 presentations 10,495 Parents and professionals	60 presentations and reach 1,500 parents and professionals.	100+ presentations 35,697 Parents and professionals
Conduct topical workshop.		54 workshops 1,080 participants	250+ workshops 6000+ participants
Prepare parent leaders to conduct workshops in there communities.		120 parent leaders trained	SEE INFORMATION IN "PROBLEMS" AREA

Other Successes of the NCC Collaborative include:

- A significant increase in serving unserved and underserved families. For example, PHP has increased the amount of Hispanic support by 600% (from 577 families in 1996 to 3700 families 2002) and the Vietnamese support by even a larger percent, from 29 families in 1996 to over 1400 families serviced in 2002.
- All training material was revised to reflect reauthorization of IDEA.
- Conflict resolution, ADR and mediation are incorporated into all of our IEP trainings.
- DREDF acted as the lead agency to get information out to parents and professionals on the changes in federal and state laws and their significance to children in special education. DREDF created the Rapid Response Network to communicate nationally information on the ongoing issues of the reauthorization of IDEA.
- Updated information on the California High School Exit Exam, which will take affect in 2004, is on our web sites, presented at trainings and in one to one contacts.
- Parents Helping Parents operates an interactive database accessible on the worldwide web. The database provides access to 3,012 individual resources serving the needs of children with special needs. Of these resources 1,613 were based in California and 687 were Santa Clara County resources. New resources are added weekly. Those who are not able to access the information electronically are able to access it through PHP's parent specialists.

- Topical workshops rely on the expertise of our collaborative partnerships and use staff, volunteer parent facilitators, and other professionals. These workshops provide an opportunity for parents and professionals to learn together as they support children with special needs. A few of the topical trainings include presentation on: Hearings Therapist Training; LD/ ADD: Social Learning Disabilities in Dyslexia; Emotional Issue Children with CP; Assistive Technology in the Inclusion; Tourette's: Nutrition Issues; IEP Mental Health Issues; Grief; Therapeutic Supports for ADD, Helping with Homework; Building Home/School Autism Treatment; Partnerships for Success; Alternatives Inclusive IEP's for children Non-verbal Learning; Parents as Advocates; Infant Massage; Special Feeders; Integrated Neighborhood Playgroups; Facing & Dealing with your Son or Daughter's Sexuality.
- There is a mechanism in place at each of the partner agencies to gather information and evaluate the programs. For example PHP conducts a bi-annual survey to evaluate how effectively parent training needs are addressed and to determine learning needs of families. Peer counselors and education specialists collect information through 1: 1 contact with families. Disability specific support/education groups, facilitated by parents, gather information on topics of interest on an on-going basis. Evaluations are conducted following each workshop. NCC partner agencies have worked with County Mental Health Services, County Social Services, County Probation Departments, and community organizations serving language minority families in order to more effectively serve these families without duplication of services. As a result, several joint training opportunities have been developed and acted upon.
- The NCC partner's web sites have been very helpful for parents and professionals. For example in the month of November of 2002, PHP's web site had 166,494 pages viewed averaging over 5,549 pages viewed per day.
- The NCC partners created the *HELP* manual that is used at our IDEA trainings and had it translated in to Spanish.
- The "Trainer of Trainer" program was developed for IEP training to use and grow parent leaders throughout the 28 counties. This program was completed and translated into Spanish and Vietnamese.
- The NCC partners developed an effective way to reach some hard to reach families by working with professionals who provide service to them. Both Matrix and PHP were presenters at State Universities, community colleges, and private universities. PHP had an internship program with San Jose State University, which served to enhance understanding of the resources of the parent centers and PHP, in particular. Matrix had interns from U.C. Berkeley School of Public Health Genetic Counseling Program working with families of young children. Matrix also had an intern from San Francisco State University from a post-masters program on interagency collaboration serving families of children with emotional disturbance. DREDF supported interns from universities who were studying disability law. Together statewide the partners have made presentation at conferences to social workers, preschool teachers, mental health workers, judges, probation officers, service groups, and corporate employees.
- The NCC collaborative has been an active representative on California Department of Education and local committees dealing with special education needs. NCC partner agencies are members of the Partnership Committee for Special Education, a broad based

group providing advisory input on implementation of the State Improvement Grant. DREDF continues to work on settlements with the State Department of Education. PHP has provided trainings under contract by the Ravenswood City School District to parents and special and general education teaching staff as part of the Ravenswood Corrective Action Plan. NCC has worked collaboratively with the Focused Monitors in our regions as well as at the State level.

**Unexpected Successes:**

- The NCC partners were able to increase our collaborations with other agencies, which supported the expansion of trainings and led to the increased support for families and professionals in our region. One example of collaboration is the YEA! program (Youth Educational Advocates). A project where PHP enlists volunteers and trains them to advocate for children with special needs in the Juvenile Justice system and the Social Service system.
- As partners of NCC, we were invited to participate on many committees for California Department of Education (CDE). Rosa Solorzano, from PHP, was very active on California's Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) committee bringing the expertise of a bilingual parent to the table. This group created a training program on LRE for all California educators.
- The Trainer of Trainer project has created strong relationships and collaborations with other agencies such as Special Parents Information Network in Santa Cruz county and Family Resource Network in San Joaquin county. These relationships will be critical for the success of the new PTI grant.
- We continue to increase collaboration with Institutes of Higher Education, such as San Jose State University. This year we trained graduate students from the Administrative Services and the Pupil Personnel Services program from SJSU on IDEA and 504. Next year we will increase our support to also include an LD simulation.

**Lessons Learned from Objectives not met:**

- The Trainer of Trainer program portion of this grant did not work as we had planned. For example we trained 25 parent trainers in fiscal 98-99. Of those 25, 4 people remain active to date in conducting trainings independently or in partnership with trainers from the parent centers. The others did not have local support to assist them in their efforts. Unfortunately, our grant did not provide an opportunity to offer financial support. Two of the individuals who have attended training have connected with their local family resource center (serving families in four counties in central valley and western Sierras) and have been successful at obtaining funds to conduct training within their communities.
- Travel was a considerable expense in a region as large as Northern California. As a result more trainings were conducted in the Bay Area counties surrounding the project offices. Parents and parent leaders in outlying communities were notified and invited to attend. Together the NCC partners conducted or facilitated trainings reaching a total of almost 10,000 parents and professionals. In addition to not having enough money to compensate the trainers for their time, there was a high turn over in staff that affected the success of

this endeavor. We are now focusing on compensating and growing parent leaders in these harder to reach counties.

- We created a training on "Conflict Resolution". We completed this training but it was not well attended, on several occasions it was cancelled due to no participants. Our goal was to train families and professionals in conflict resolution and inform them about ADR and mediation. Since we could not get the people to attend this particular training we resolved this issue by including Alternative Dispute Resolution, mediation and conflict resolution into our other trainings on IDEA.
- Reaching all the areas we were to serve was always a challenge. We did not have the funds or the resources to support all the families in the 28 counties. This problem has been addressed by OSEP in the new configuration and funding for the current CA PTIs'.

As the Northern California Coalition we were able to meet the majority of our goals for this grant. We were successful in substantially increasing our numbers in most areas. We have mutually benefited from working together as partners and have been able to leverage our individual expertise for the benefit of the children with special needs in our region.

We did encounter barriers that we had not expected and addressed them in Lessons Learned. California has a very strong network of PTI's. We have all worked together to ensure that all of California's children with disabilities have access to a free and appropriate education. Together we look forward to the continuing opportunities to serve California's diverse families through our Northern California Consortium Region 4 (PHP, DREDF, Matrix and Support for Families) and with our statewide partners.





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