

III. Methods

a) Policy Review and Analysis

Child welfare practice and the time required to complete case-level and administrative work are impacted by a variety of county, state, and federal policy requirements. These requirements both mandate certain practice modalities and are a means of stating best practice goals as envisioned by policy makers at the county, state, and federal levels. In order to incorporate these mandates and goals into the workload standard setting process, a systematic review of policy documents was completed for this project.

State-level statutes and policy were reviewed as an underpinning to the study, along with key federal-level documents and policies (e.g., The Adoption and Safe Families Act [ASFA] of 1997). Information that directs the counties to implement state and federal policy was reviewed through a complete search of the indexes for All County Information Notices (ACINs) and All County Letters (ACLs) from 1997 to 1999 to locate titles that might impact policy in relevant areas. Once relevant titles were located, the text of individual ACINs and ACLs was reviewed to identify and cull specifically relevant policy mandates.

Candidate state-of-the-art practices were identified and prioritized by the statewide SB 2030 advisory group for further study; and policies for new and innovative service programs, such as Family Group Decision Making (FGDM), Healthy Start, and Wraparound services were reviewed and policy mandates in those areas incorporated into the standard-setting process through special studies. The state's compliance review documentation format was also reviewed as a means of assessing state level policy requirements. Analysis of federal policy requirements impacting child welfare practice in California previously completed by Walter R. McDonald & Associates, Inc., was also reviewed.

Policy templates or summaries listing specific policy requirements that impact the time required for case practice were then completed for the core study areas and for the special studies areas. The templates and summaries produced covered the following subject:

Core Practice Areas:

- Prevention and Community-Based Collaboration (this also includes the Healthy Start special study examined in the special studies area)
- Emergency Response (ER) (included Dependency Investigation/Intake)
- Family Maintenance (FM)
- Family Reunification (FR)
- Permanent Placement (PP)
- Out-of-Home Care
- Other (Other included Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) and Inter-County Work)

Special Studies Areas: In some instances, as noted below, only a background policy review of selected aspects of practice at the case-related task level was completed to prepare facilitators for a focused structured estimation process.

- Assessment of Relative/Kinship Homes
- Health and Education Passport
- Family Group Decision Making (Family Unity Meeting (FUM)/Family Group Conferencing (FGC))
- Healthy Start (included school-based, school-linked services)
- Multilingual/Multicultural Services (background policy review)
- Structured Decision Making (SDM) (background policy review)
- Wraparound
- Training (background policy review)
- Independent Living Program (ILP)
- CalWORKs (California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids)/Domestic Violence (DV)

Each summary or template completed then served as a basis for discussion in the core study and special studies standard setting focus groups conducted for the project.

The following specific policy sources and information were included (or reviewed and determined not relevant at the case-specific practice level) in the policy summaries, templates, and background review materials developed for each area:

Table III.01–Policy Sources and Information

Core Study Areas	Policy Sources Reviewed & Deemed Relevant
Prevention and Community-Based Collaboration	California Education Code, §§8803-8807, Welfare and Institutions Code §14067 (a) and §4383.
Emergency Response	CDSS Manual of Policy and Procedures (MPP) §31-084, §31-105.1, §31-105.2, §31-105.111, §31-105.112, §31-105.113, §31-105.114, §31-105.116, §31-105.117, §31-120, §31-125.21, §31-125.226, §31-125.3, §31-125.4, §31-125.5, §31-125.51, §31-130, §31-135.2, §31-135.11, §31-135.12, §31-135.21(as updated by California Welfare and Institutions Code §361 (c) (5)), §31-135.3, §31-135.41, §31-084.441, §31-201.11, and §31-201.111.
Family Maintenance	CDSS Manual of Policy and Procedures (MPP) §31-084, §31-105.1, §31-105.2, §31-105.111, §31-105.112, §31-105.113, §31-105.114, §31-115, §31-105.116, §31-105.117, §31-120, §31-125.21, §31-125.226, §31-125.3, §31-125.4, §31-125.5, §31-125.51, §31-130, §31-201, §31-205, §31-206, §31-210, §31-220, §31-225, §31-230, §31-235, §31-320.3, §31-320.31, §31-325.2, and §31-325.21.
Family Reunification	CDSS Manual of Policy and Procedures (MPP) §31-084, §31-105.1, §31-115.1, §31-120.1, §31-125.2, §31-125.22, §31-125.221, §31-125.222, §31-125.3, §31-135, §31-201.133 (a), §31-201.11, §31-201.12, §31-201.133 (a) & (b), §31-205.1, §31-205.11, §31-205.12, §31-205.13 , §31-205.14, §31-205.15, §31-205.16, §31-205.17, §31-205.18, CDSS MPP §31-206, §31-206.21, §31-206.22, §31-206.222, §31-206.23, §31-206.3, §31-206.33, §31-210.13, §31-210.131, §31-210.14, §31-210.2, §31-210.21, §31-310.13, §31-310.14, §31-310.15, §31-315.4, §31-320.2, §31-320.21, §31-330.2, §31-320.41, §31-340.2, and California Welfare and Institutions Code §356, §358, §361.5(a) (2), §361.5(a) (2)) §361.5(b), §366.3 (c), §16507 (a), §16507.2, and §16507.3 (c), 42 U.S.C. §671 (a)(15), and 45 CFR §1356.21 (b)(5).
Permanent Placement	CDSS Manual of Policy and Procedures (MPP) §31-084, §31-105.1, §31-115.1, §31-120.1, §31-125.2, §31-125.22, §31-125.221, §31-125.222, §31-125.3, §31-201.12 (c)(2)(A) through (C), §31-320.412, §31-330.211, §31-425.1, §31-425.11, §31-425.12, §31-425.13, §31-425.131, §31-425.132, §31-425.14, §31-425.15, §31-425.16, §31-425.2, §31-520.1, §31-520.11, §31-520.12, California Welfare and Institutions Code §361.5 (f), and ACIN I-11-99 on Enactment of AB 2773 Implementing the Provisions of the Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (dated February 5, 1999), reporting amendments to Welfare and Institutions Code §366.22, amendments to Welfare and Institutions Code §16501.1, and amendments to Welfare and Institutions Code §16508.1.

Table III.01–Policy Sources and Information

Core Study Areas	Policy Sources Reviewed & Deemed Relevant
Out-of-Home Care	CDSS Manual of Policy and Procedures (MPP) §31-002(e)(2), §31-084, §31-105.1, §31-115.1, §31-120.1, §31-125.2, §31-125.22, §31-125.221, §31-125.222, §31-125.3, §31-205.17, §31-405.1 (a) & (b), §31-405.1 (2), §31-410.41, §31-420.15, §31-420.231, §31-445.1, §31-445.12, §31-445.15, and California Welfare and Institutions Code §361.3, and §362.8.
Child Care and Other (Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children and Inter-County Work)	<p>CDSS Manual of Policy and Procedures (MPP) §31-206.312, §31-206.313, §31-320.2, §31-320.21, §31-320.41, §31-320.414, §31-320.54, §31-325.3, §31-335.3, §31-445.1, §31-505.121 (a), §31-505.122, §31-505.123 (a), (b), and (d), §31-510, §31-510.33, §31-510.37, §31-510.42, §31-510.44, §31-510.47, §31-510.48, and California Welfare and Institutions Code §§361.2 and 727.1, Family Code Sections §§ 7900 – 7909.</p> <p>(Reviewed but deemed not directly on point for the purposes of this study: CDSS All County Letter 97-73 CalWORKs Implementation – Child Care (dated October 29, 1997) and CDSS ACIN I-45-99 on Child Care Monthly Report (dated July 19, 1999))</p>
Special Studies Areas	Policy Sources Reviewed & Deemed Relevant
Assessment of Relative/Kinship Homes	ACIN I-18-99, dated March 1, 1999, Subject: Assembly Bill (AB) 1544 Model Relative Assessment Guidelines.
Health and Education Passport	California Welfare and Institutions Code §16010 (a) – (d) (as amended by SB 543, chaptered 9/28/99, CDSS MPP 31-075.3(h), 31-206.35 through 31-206.352, 31-405.1 (k), (ACIN I-79-90 requested but not available).
Family Unity Meeting/Family Group Conferencing	No state-level policy available for review. American Humane Association. (1997). Englewood, CO: American Humane Association. (consulted as a best practices reference publication)
Healthy Start	Healthy Start Support Services for Children Act in California Education Code, §§8800-8807, California Welfare and Institutions Code §14067 (a) and §4383.
Multilingual/Multicultural Services	CDSS ACIN I-41-98 on Ethnicity and Primary Language Report for July 1998 (Listing Information and Referral, ER, FR, FM, and PP as mandated services for purposes of reporting multilingual services, dated July 30, 1998); and CDSS ACIN I-50-99 on Ethnicity and Primary Language Report for July 1999 (Listing Information and Referral, ER, FR, FM, and PP as mandated services for purposes of reporting multilingual services, dated August 4, 1999).
Structured Decision Making	California Structured Decision Making System – Policy and Procedures Manual

Table III.01–Policy Sources and Information

Special Studies Areas	Policy Sources Reviewed & Deemed Relevant
Wraparound	CDSS ACIN I-28-99 on SB 163 Wraparound Service Pilot (dated April 7, 1999) and Attachment II: SB 163 and title IV-E Waiver Wraparound Standards.
Training	CALSWEC Training Advisory Group reference materials
Independent Living Program	42 United States Code §675 & §677; California DSS Manual Letter No. CWS-99-01 §31-320.412 (a) (4); California DSS Manual of Policy and Procedures §31-525 and §31-205.47; CDSS Guidelines for the Independent Living Program (June 1999 draft); ACIN I-40-98, dated July 22,1998, Subject: Independent Living Program; ACIN I-57-98, dated October 14, 1998, Subject: Independent Living Program (ILP) Strategic Planning Group; All County Letter 98-77, dated October 1, 1998, Subject: Independent Living Program (ILP) Annual Statistical Report (SOC 405 A).and the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (S. 1327, H.R. 1802) as pending in Congress (10/99).
CalWORKs/Domestic Violence	CDSS All County Letter 97-54 on California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids County Plan (requiring County Plan to include services to victims of domestic violence) dated September 10, 1997; and CDSS All County Letter 97-71 on Implementation of Domestic Violence Provision - California Work Opportunity and Responsibility for Kids (CalWORKs) Program (implementing AB 1542, statutes of 1997) dated October 28, 1997.

There have been many changes to policy mandates and best practice goals at the federal, state, and county level since the last standard setting process of this magnitude conducted by CDSS 15 years ago that are likely to have had a substantial impact on workload. The policy sources consulted for this study to document such change included (but are not limited to) the following:

Federal Policy:

- Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (Public Law 105-89, as implemented through AB 2773 and ACIN I-11-99)
- Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (as affecting the Independent Living Program in Title IV-E)
- Summary of portions of title IV-E (Entitlement)
- Summary of portions of title IV-B (capped at set funding level)
- Summary of portions of title IV-A (Emergency Assistance) (now replaced by Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF))

- Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) excerpts
- Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) excerpts
- Excerpts of selected federal laws that significantly amended titles IV-B and IV-E since 1982, including Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985, Family Preservation and Support Services Initiative of 1993 (Public Law 103-66), Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 and Interethnic Adoption Provisions of 1996, and 45 CFR 1340.15(b) concerning medically neglected infants.

State Law and Policy:

- CDSS Manual of Policy and Procedures
- ICPC excerpts
- Healthy Start Support Services for Children Act in California Education Code, §§8800-8807
- California Structured Decision Making System – Policy and Procedures Manual
- State Compliance Review Documents
- State of California Guidelines for the Independent Living Program (June 1999)
- Complete indexes reviewed, relevant policies from 1997 to 1999 reviewed in greater detail
- ACIN and ACL

Other Sources:

- California Child Welfare Services Mandate Analysis prepared for the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services by Walter R. McDonald & Associates, Inc. (April 8, 1999)
- American Humane Association. (1997). . Englewood, CO: American Humane Association. (consulted as a best practices reference publication).

b) Focus Groups for Measurement Objectives

To conduct the workload study portion of the project, it was first necessary to determine the measurement objectives (i.e., the larger “units of service” and specific “tasks” under which time measurements would be recorded and categorized for the study). The goal was to ensure that the units of service and tasks were as specific as possible to child welfare practice in California. Measurement objectives had to be generic enough, however, to be useful and meaningful to child welfare staff throughout the state, as 100% of the staff were expected to record their working time during the study.

In order to fulfill these goals and develop the measurement objectives for the workload study, a series of 11 focus groups were conducted in locations throughout the state. Caseworkers, clerical staff, supervisors, and administrative personnel were invited to participate in the groups, with the exact mix of personnel left to the discretion of the individual counties. A regional approach was taken to determine focus group locations, so that all 58 counties in the state had an opportunity to send participants to a group located within a reasonable distance to each county. The regional sites of the groups and counties invited to participate at each site are as follows:

Table III.02–Regional Focus Group Sites

Host Site	Counties Invited to Participate
Los Angeles (2 groups)	Los Angeles County - At the request of county personnel, two focus groups were conducted in Los Angeles County, one with direct service workers and one with administrative personnel.
Santa Clara	Santa Clara, Monterey, San Benito, Santa Cruz, San Mateo, Alameda, and Contra Costa
San Francisco	San Francisco, Marin, Sonoma, Mendocino, Napa, and Solano
Fresno	Fresno, Kings, Tulare, Madera, Merced, Mariposa, Stanislaus, Tuolumne, San Joaquin, and Kern
Redding	Shasta, Tehama, Del Norte, Humboldt, Siskiyou, Trinity, Modoc, Lassen, Plumas, Butte, Glenn, Colusa, Lake
Sacramento	Sacramento, Yolo, Sutter, Yuba, Nevada, Sierra, Placer, El Dorado, Amador, Calaveras, Alpine, Mono, Inyo
San Diego (pilot group)	San Diego, Imperial
Santa Ana	Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino
Ventura	Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo
20 small Counties group-conducted in Sacramento	Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Inyo, Lake, Lassen, Mariposa, Modoc, Mono, Nevada

A complete schedule of all groups including information about host county contact persons, SB 2030 workload personnel staffing each group, number of personnel invited to attend from each county, dates of groups, and their locations can be found in the Appendix 1a of this report.

The initial (pilot) measurement objectives focus group was conducted in San Diego with staff from San Diego and Imperial Counties. Over the course of two days, facilitators from the SB 2030 workload staff:

- Provided information on the general purpose and background of the study to staff,
- Introduced the Excel template format to be used for automated data collection,
- Reviewed definitional materials on Units of Service and Tasks,
- Provided examples of measurement objectives developed for similar studies in other states, and
- Led staff through a discussion of practice modalities in California.
(A copy of the packet of materials provided to staff at this and all other measurement objectives focus groups is included in Appendix 1 of this report.)

SB 2030 workload staff explained that for the purpose of this study, a “Unit of Service” is defined as “services or major activities which correspond to a case (either a child or a family) or to a service provider. Each unit of service must have a beginning point and an ending point, and can be measured or counted.” Tasks are defined as “the detailed activities which combine to make up a unit of service. Tasks are also used to describe work-related activities that occur but are unrelated to cases or to developing provider resources. Tasks are usually short-term activities performed in a single day.” (See Appendix 1d for further description.)

General Unit of Service categories defined by the pilot group included non-child welfare services, non-case-related activities, and case-related activities in a variety of service areas categorized mainly in the traditional California service areas of Emergency Response, Family Maintenance, Family Reunification, Permanent Placement, and other practice areas. The inclusion of preventive services delivered through community-based collaboratives was a special concern of this pilot group. In addition, the group prioritized the inclusion of a set of tasks specific to use of the CWS/CMS, which the group felt added significant time to their work. The result of group efforts was an initial template of Units of Service and Tasks specific to California child welfare practice in these urban and rural locations. An initial set of definitions, clarifying the work to be included in time measured under specific Units of Service and Tasks was also completed at this time.

In the remaining series of 10 focus groups conducted in other locations throughout the state, the Units of Service and Tasks for the workload study were further refined. SB 2030 workload staff attempted to address special concerns raised in each group as thoroughly as possible by the inclusion of specific Units of Service or Tasks. For example, a Unit of Service covering “Administrative Activities” was added at the suggestion of one of the Los Angeles focus groups. Additional input to the Unit of Service and Task template was received from an advisory group meeting and through written comments. For example, at the request of The California Partnership for Children, a task was clarified to include activities performed to carry out Health and Education Passport requirements.

On balance, the consensus of all focus groups was to be as inclusive of child welfare practice across the state as possible in the Units of Service and Task codes. SB 2030 workload staff also raised the countervailing objective of not unduly burdening workers in the workload study process with a multiplicity of codes. As a result, certain case characteristics impacting practice time (e.g., medically fragile, multilingual services) were coded separately as special case characteristics, rather than as discrete units of service or tasks. However, the final template of measurement objectives for the workload study resulting from the work of all statewide focus groups gives a very fine level of detail by including 63 Units of Service (grouped into 17 categories) and 129 specific Task codes. This final set of work measurement Units of Service and Tasks child welfare codes is included in Appendix 3, as are the definitional materials for the Units of Service and Tasks.

What follows is a description of the processes and tools used to conduct the workload study.

c) Work Measurement

The Population Being Measured

This workload study was designed as a 100% sample (i.e., a true census) of every eligible California child welfare departmental staff fitting the criteria defined below. The criteria for employees who were expected to participate in the workload study were set in a memo from the office of Douglas Park, Chief of Financial Planning Branch, State of California Health and Human Services Agency Department of Social Services on August 18, 1999 (see Appendix 3a). The memo determined that study participants should include:

1. All county staff whose position is funded from the CWS budget, and/or
2. All county staff who work directly with CWS clients or who process specific CWS client records. (See Appendix 3 for a copy of the memo.)

These criteria essentially included all caseworkers, casework supervisors, CWS case aides, clerical staff, and any administrative staff who satisfied either of the above criteria. By choosing to gather data from the entire eligible population, it was possible to gather information reflecting the diversity and scope of workload burdens on staff across the state. It also eliminated such issues as under-representation of smaller counties with particular demographics or CWS configuration and other forms of sampling error from becoming a concern in the workload study analysis and interpretation of findings.

Gathering Work Measurement Data

Typical workload studies employ a “paper-and-pencil” instrument to gather information. However, this requires extensive data entry and validation protocols (which ensure data quality) that would have been difficult, if not impossible, to implement for such a large population given the short time frame imposed on the project. Since this workload study was designed as a true census, it required an innovative and more efficient approach to data collection. Therefore, the project team’s approach to measuring time relied on computer software and the CWS/CMS computer mainframe network (See Appendix 4 for more information on the interface with CWS/CMS).

Employees meeting the criteria for inclusion in the workload study were required to use software designed by the American Humane Association (AHA) or a paper version of the electronic form to record their daily activities. (For simplicity’s sake, the data collection software will be referred to as an “electronic form” in this report since it was designed to replicate traditional workload paper forms electronically.) The data collection electronic form was designed using the Microsoft EXCEL environment. EXCEL was chosen as a software platform for this project since all California local child welfare departments have computers with Microsoft Office software (with EXCEL included) pre-installed. This ensured software compatibility with current computer functions and saved the project team significant software development time.

Although EXCEL is generally used as spreadsheet software, it was possible, with the use of additional Visual Basic code, to convert the spreadsheet functions of EXCEL into a sophisticated data-gathering device. The electronic form provided the SB 2030 project with several advantages over traditional approaches to workload measurement. Three key advantages were:

1. The software would record and save the daily activities of each employee included in the workload study in a manner that built in quality control measures. By having all data entered into a computer program, such data-validation issues as illegible handwriting (which often adds a great deal of time to data validation) were avoided. Also, by saving each employee's daily log in a single computer application, it became possible for employees to check for errors in their own entries and make corrections to previous days' data.
2. The software would automatically load ("populate") employee linked caseload data for those staff who were primary case carrying workers once they initialized their individual form. "Primary Case Carrying" workers are those designated as the primary worker for a referral or a case on the CWS/CMS. The populating function of the electronic form saved these staff time of re-loading information that was accessible elsewhere in the CWS/CMS.
3. The software was designed to automatically save a copy of each employee's daily work log to the CWS/CMS computer mainframe network, providing a foundation for a database that required little manipulation prior to analytic use. Each day of the workload study, after staff saved their day's log of tasks, the daily work records were collected from the server system throughout the state (through a partnership with IBM and project staff) and compiled for analysis. This provided project staff with the opportunity to conduct sampling of the incoming data for data validation and hone analytic strategies while still in the data-gathering process.

A further advantage of the electronic form was that, for the vast majority of counties who used the computer version, the electronic form eliminated any need for manual data entry from paper forms, as was required by the project in order to arrive at AHA ready for analysis. In those counties in which paper forms were used, it appears that this choice was made either due to the tight training time constraints inherent in this fast-paced project and/or due to concerns about or regulations barring CWS staff's use and knowledge of computers. Unfortunately, those counties who elected to undertake using paper forms may have had to extend a greater effort to enter data into the electronic form, as required.

Initializing the Data Collection Form

To disseminate the form across the state, a compressed, or zipped, copy of the data collection electronic form was delivered to each employee's computer hard-drive automatically. IBM Global Services accomplished this using the CWS/CMS server network in the days preceding the

beginning of each county's workload study period (for an explanation of this procedure, see Appendix 4). To unzip or open the compressed file, an employee needed to click on the file icon that appeared on their computer desktop window (this is the screen that appears when a computer is on and no software programs are open). This action prompted the form to automatically decompress (load) onto the computer's desktop.

Once on the desktop, many different staff could use the form since each person's initialization process would automatically create a unique copy of the electronic form for that staff person. Upon initial opening, the form displayed an "Employee Information" window floating on the cover page. This Employee Information window asked for the employee's name, the county number, the employee's CWS/CMS logon name (if applicable), and the employee's county identification number.¹ Once that information was entered, a new copy of the data collection form was automatically created, named after the employee's county identification number. Some county staff also copied the compressed file onto stand-alone computers (computers not connected to the county's servers) for staff using those computers. The areas in which the process and functions differed due to the standalone computers are described in a section subsequent to the description of the electronic form, which follows.

The Electronic Data Collection Form: Format and Use

An EXCEL file is called a book. It contains multiple pages that can be accessed by clicking on a tab. For a visual example of the form, a set of annotated examples of the data collection form is found in Appendix 3d. Each page of the data collection form was designed with a specific function in mind; these are explained in the following sections.

The Cover Page

This page captured the key pieces of information about employees to enable project staff to contact them should there be any problems with data submitted. When an employee first initialized (opened and used) the form, he or she would begin by entering any missing

¹ An employee's county identification number was a number determined by each county to uniquely identify a worker. Great latitude was given to each county to determine what the most appropriate number should be, given that some counties already had an employee numbering system in place, while others did not. The employee ID number was designed primarily as a means to make certain that each employee had a unique value to represent them in the event that more than one employee in the same county had the same name.

information needed into the cover page. The information entered during initialization (e.g employee's name, county number, CWS/CMS ID number) populated the cover page, however staff needed to type in their supervisor's name and phone number, and the amount of time the employee had worked for his/her county CWS department (in months and years). After that initial data entry, employees filling out the form did not need to return to the cover page.

The Caseload Page

The caseload page contained information on all CWS cases worked on during the workload study.² As noted above, primary case-carrying social workers' caseload pages were automatically populated (written in) with the active cases recognized as being assigned to them in CWS/CMS. Briefly stated, the software automatically read the employee's CWS/CMS logon name from the Employee Identification window, and conducted a search for that employee's caseload within a file, created by IBM, which resided within the county's server system. The file contained all open cases and referrals copied from the CWS/CMS the week prior to the start of each county's workload study time period. (A detailed explanation of the population subroutine can be found in Appendix 4.)

Automatically copying an employee's caseload into the form minimized the need for workers to enter caseload information themselves, however, it did not eliminate that need altogether. Employees who did not have a valid CWS/CMS logon name, or who provided secondary casework services to certain clients, or who were working on a standalone computer, would not have had appropriate caseload information downloaded into the caseload page. However, if these employees provided direct service to clients (as defined in the definitions of units of service determined by the focus groups), caseload information had to be manually entered into the caseload page. Additionally, any primary case-carrying worker who had new referrals or cases opened during or immediately prior to the workload study would have had to enter those cases manually into the caseload page.

The procedure outlined above occurred only once during the initialization of the data collection form. Once this information was entered into the Data Collection Form and saved, the procedure

² It did not include Adult Protective Services cases, even if an employee worked on such cases during the workload study, since these cases were beyond the scope of the project mandate.

did not need to be repeated. Subsequent to the initialization of the form, neither the subroutines governing the Employee Information window or the caseload download were active.

The Case Characteristics Page

During the focus group process, it was determined that cases often have special characteristics that could impact the work patterns of primary case-carrying workers such as multiple children needing services, multilingual services, and so forth (for a detailed list of these characteristics, see Appendix 3b). These special characteristics were recorded in the case characteristics page of the data collection form. All case names and case ID's³ appearing in the caseload page were also automatically populated, or displayed, in the case characteristics page for primary case carrying workers. Staff performing tasks related to other people's cases were asked to complete the case characteristics pages best they could. There were up to seven blank spaces available for recording different characteristics describing each case. An employee using the electronic data collection form needed to "mouse click" a box to see the list of all possible case characteristics, available from a drop-down menu. The employee could then pick the appropriate characteristic from the list.

An employee would fill out the information in the above pages only once, when the form was first opened. As with the cover and caseload pages, the information in the pages above would be saved within the software, making it unnecessary for employees to continually update that information. The exception to this general rule was for those instances of new cases being added to an employee's caseload during the two weeks of the workload study.

The Daily Log Pages

Each day of the study period, employees were required to enter their activities in a daily log. These pages constituted the core data collection page for the work-study where the specifics of an employee's daily activities (their type and time duration) were entered. There were 14 pages for the daily log; one for each day of the workload study. (It was assumed that most employees would not work each and every day of the workload study, however, all 14 days were available for those staff who worked weekends, overtime, or according to other arrangements.)

Employees were instructed to leave blank any days that they did not work due to their usual time off (e.g., weekends and other unpaid days excluding specified leave). What follows is a brief description of the method used to enter data into the daily log.

Employees were trained to begin any day's daily log entries by putting the work date⁴ and the time of day in the spaces provided on the daily log. After these initial values were entered, employees used a "Data Entry Form" window to enter individual lines into the Daily Log (for an illustration of the Daily Log page and the Data Entry Form, see Appendix 3d). This window was created using Visual Basic to make it easier for an employee to see all the information that made up a single activity record at once, rather than scrolling back and forth across the Daily Log page to see the entire record.

The Data Entry Form consisted of several fields which are illustrated in Appendix 3d. For the purposes of this section, the essential components of each line of a given activity record are described below. They were:

1. A . appeared in the window for those activity records involving direct service delivery to a client.
2. A field appeared for a . and , and a . and . By selecting a broad category first (either in Units of Service or Tasks) the drop down list for specific service or task type was automatically selected. If an employee preferred to go directly to the specific service or task, the category fields could be skipped. Appendix 3 details the relationship between categories and specific services/tasks.
3. A field to record the . appeared. Employees entered the time of day that an activity ended in this space.

The following fields made up a single activity record: a case name (if applicable/known), a specific unit of service, a specific task, and a finish time. After entering this information into the Data Entry Form window, the employee could record this entry into the daily log by clicking on "ok".

³ The case IDs appearing in the automatic download procedure were case tracking numbers created by the CWS/CMS. The employees did not routinely know these numbers. Those employees manually entering any caseload information into the caseload page were therefore not responsible for entering this information.

⁴ The work date is the date that the activities recorded in the log were completed, not necessarily the date that the data entry took place.

A time ladder approach was used to collect information about the series of tasks performed on different (or the same) cases during a day. In a time ladder, each activity is considered a “rung” in an unbroken series of activities making up a day. Employees recorded each and every activity of the day, with the following caveat: activities requiring less than two minutes to perform could be “collapsed” (i.e., the time involved could be included) into the next activity. Using this time ladder approach had two advantages. First, it captured all activities in a day including breaks, unpaid time (e.g., lunch) and all case- and non-case-related activities in a day. Second, since all activities were recorded, an employee needed only to record one time value for any activity: the time that the activity ended. Since the activities were recorded without any break in the day’s events, it was assumed that the beginning time of any given activity was the end time for the activity before it. For the first activity of the day, the beginning time would be the time that the work day began. So, for instance, if an activity ended at 11:51 AM, it was assumed that the next activity recorded in the time ladder began at the close of that previous activity, also at 11:51 AM.

A time-per-activity value was computed automatically and displayed by the Data Collection Form. The calculation was based on: the current activity’s finish time minus the prior activity’s finish time. Additionally, the total time worked in a day was calculated and displayed. This was simply all the time-per-activity values added together. These values allowed an employee to double-check his or her entries for correctness in terms of time duration of an activity and hours worked in a day.

Since the time ladder approach assumes all work activities occurred without interruption, it was necessary to create a “placeholder” value to show gaps of unpaid time that could occur in an employee’s day. This “work-gap” code was used if a long period of unpaid time lapsed between work events. For instance, if an employee was called to respond to an emergency involving a client four hours after his or her last work task, this would add an additional string of activities on the same day, but after a 4-hour gap of unpaid time. These and other similar enhancements or functions were incorporated into the electronic form in order to reflect the real work of staff across the state.

Closing and Saving the Form

After completing the entry of activities, an employee would save and close the form. Saving and closing was performed in one single operation: when the close function was activated, the form was automatically saved. This dual function of closing made it impossible for an employee to close the application and accidentally forget to save his or her work.

The save function generated two different versions of the saved form. The first was a saved version of the EXCEL application that resided on the desktop. The second version of the application was transferred to a predetermined location on the county server system (for a detailed description of this process, see Appendix 4). This second version of the EXCEL application was then available for downloading from the CWS/CMS network to a server connected to the CWS/CMS and administered by AHA. These downloaded files formed the basis of the data analysis.

Closing/saving the form could occur as many times in the day as an employee wished. An employee could record a few hours of his/her day in a daily log page, perform the close/save function, and then come back later in the day to add to the existing entries. In this case, the newer, more updated version of the form would replace the older version.

Modes of Recording Case Information and Activities

As noted above, because of the size of the population being studied and the time available for data validation, only data recorded using the software Data Collection Form was analyzed. Each employee was required to have his or her data entered into an electronic form that resided on a computer which was connected to the CWS/CMS. However, how this data was initially recorded by any given employee, and how each county chose to approach the process of this electronic data entry, varied.

Using the Paper Forms

Paper versions of the daily logs and case characteristics page of the electronic Data Collection Form were also available for use by employees to record their case information and activities (copies of the paper forms can be found in Appendix 3d). It was assumed that some employees would not be able to record all individual activities and finish times into the computer

application as they were working. Instead, these employees recorded all or parts of their activities on a paper version of the daily log page. Since only those activity records entered into the electronic form were accepted for analysis, SB 2030 project team staff recommended that employees would have this data entered to their personal electronic form within one to two days of initially recording the activities.⁵

Some counties chose to have clerical staff enter data on behalf of all participating employees. In this case, paper forms were filled out by employees, and then turned over to designated staff for entry into the electronic form. Electronic form entry proceeded as described above, with the clerical employee initializing personalized data collection forms on behalf of other employees.

Training for Use of the Workload study Instrument

In order to prepare staff for participation in the workload study, 36 two and a half hour trainings were delivered over a 5-week period across the state in 10 training sites. In all, over 500 county staff participated in these training events. (See Appendix 2g for a county-by-county tally of the sign up sheets obtained by SB 2030 project staff at the events.) Trainings were offered in the week preceding the actual start of the workload study for each county. Each county selected the group of trainers to be trained by SB 2030 project staff following the “train-the-trainer” model. Staff were trained to use both the paper and the computer version of the workload study data collection instrument. In addition, 45 staff in Sacramento were given a paper-version-only training. (See Appendix 2 for copies of the paper materials provided before and at the training sessions.)

⁵ A small number of counties chose to keep paper records of all employee activities throughout the two weeks of the time study, and then enter two weeks of data into the electronic form all at once. This method had a potential margin of error, since it did not allow for any data validation and error checking during the data collection phase of the workload study. However, analysis of the data from counties that chose this method found no significant increase in error rates compared to other counties.

All staff were provided numerous resources at the trainings, including, but not limited to:

- A manual describing the steps required to participate in the workload study,
- A paper and electronic copies of the workload study instrument,
- A PowerPoint presentation for the trained staff to use back in their counties, and
- Information about how to access the 24-hour, 7-day a week technical assistance support provided by SB 2030 project staff.

Following the training, county staff returned to their counties and delivered training to all employees who were required to participate in the workload study. During the course of the trainings, project trainers collected feedback about the training content and incorporated this feedback into later trainings and materials. The materials in Appendix 2 reflect the final versions of all the documents.

Rollout

As noted above, the workload study was conducted over the course of several weeks, with different parts of the state participating at different times. The state was divided into five zones, each zone active for a continuous 2-week period. The scheduling of active zones was designed to ensure that no more than two zones were active at any given time. This allowed project staff the opportunity to focus training and technical assistance on a limited population.

A complete listing of the zones and a timetable for data collection can be seen in Table III.03. Two separate issues altered the original timetable proposed on August 5, 1999, which included a start-up date of August 23 for the first zone (Zone One). First, the originally proposed dates proved to be too optimistic in terms of software development and in terms of training and logistics. A new timetable was proposed on August 10. This new timetable moved the proposed first zone (Zone One) to the end of the workload study period. All other dates remained the same. As a result of this move, the southern counties contained in Zone Two began the workload study as the first active Zone on September 7.

A second issue also altered the timeframe of the workload study. Due to county training and logistics concerns, as well as some confusion as to how to negotiate the Labor Day holiday (which occurred on September 6), most of the counties of Zone One (with the exception of Riverside County) chose not to begin the workload study on September 7. Instead, they asked

for, and were granted, an additional week of training and preparation, and began the workload study on the following Tuesday, September 14. No further extensions or changes to the timetable were required.

Table III.03–Zone Designation and Timetable for Workload Study Rollout

Zone	Counties	Dates	
		Training *	Implementation
Zone 2	Riverside	August 30 - September 3	September 7 - 20
	Imperial, Orange, San Bernardino, San Diego	August 30 - September 13	September 14 - 27
Zone 3	Alameda, Butte, Colusa, Contra Costa, Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Marin, Mendocino, Modoc, Monterey, Napa, Plumas, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Siskiyou, Solano, Sonoma, Tehama, Trinity	September 7 - 13	September 14 - 27
Zone 4	Santa Barbara, Kern, Los Angeles (Phase One), Ventura	September 13 - 17	September 21 - October 4
Zone 5	Los Angeles (Phase Two)	September 21 - 27	September 28 - October 11
Zone 1	Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Fresno, Inyo, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Mono, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Sierra, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tulare, Tuolumne, Yolo, Yuba	September 27 - October 1	October 4 - October 17

* This reflects time allocated for both the train-the-trainer sessions and the county rollout trainings.

Data Collection and Error Checking

Data Collection for any given zone was an ongoing process, occurring nightly as data was automatically copied to the server system. IBM Global Services facilitated this effort by automating and implementing a sweep procedure for designated county servers throughout the State. Data collection, however, did not end with the last day of the workload study period. Instead, data collection from the server system remained an ongoing, statewide activity beyond the end of the last workload study zone's 2-week timeframe. This additional time allowed employees and counties a chance to error check their data collection forms, as well as finish data entry for workload activities previously recorded on the paper-and-pencil instrument.

Technical assistance was available to participants throughout the life of the workload study. (For a review of the technical support available to participants, see Appendix 3.)

Although the last date of the workload study period was October 17, data was collected from the server system through Tuesday, November 2. Through a process of continual updates and cleanup procedures, it was determined that data from the November 2 sweep of the servers provided the best, most complete data from the servers. It was also determined that further sweeping of the servers past the November 2 date would not marginally increase the quantity or quality of the data.

d) Special Studies Methodology

In addition to the workload study, special studies were conducted to enhance understanding about distinct activities that may impact CWS workload considerations. These focus groups were proposed to address either low frequency or periodic activities that would not be adequately captured during the workload study. The specific topics needing further special study were identified by the advisory group. SB 2030 project staff conducted policy reviews to support the focus group discussions. The 10 topics addressed through special studies focus groups were:

- New Worker and Supervisor Training
- Assessment of Relative Homes, Kinship Homes, and Kinship Support Centers
- Health and Education Passport
- Family Unity, Family Group Conferencing

- Healthy Start, School-Based, School-Linked, Family Resource Center
- Multilingual/Multicultural Services
- Structured Decision Making
- Wraparound and Multidisciplinary Team (MDT)
- Independent Living Project
- CalWORKs Interface and Domestic Violence

The original design for these groups was to use structured estimation techniques, which would collect data similar to the workload study but use estimation rather than time measurement. However, due to the wide variations in county practice in the areas chosen, a different design using more intensive review of policy, current practice, and best practice was conducted. In addition to defining the parameters of practice, group participants also made recommendations on the most efficient way to do a more focused workload study in each area in the future. (For a review of the special studies framework, see Appendix 5.)

e) Budget Review and Financial Modeling

This section of the methodology chapter addresses the issues and approaches used to review and evaluate the existing California Child Welfare Services Budgeting Process. A detailed explanation of the budget process is contained in the Appendix 9 of this report. (Child Welfare Service Budget Study).

Evaluation of Current Budget Methodology

To obtain the information and input needed to address the budgetary review requirements of the study, members of the project team interviewed California Department of Social Services staff responsible for preparing the state budget and county allocations, interviewed four county child welfare budget directors and members of their staff, and conducted two meetings with the Financial Subcommittee of the Child Welfare Directors Association. The project team assigned to the financial review also met jointly with CDSS staff on three occasions to review preliminary findings, clarify the team's understanding of the budget process, and explore approaches to the budgeting process.

Several key documents were subjected to a comprehensive review by the project team, including the Governor's 1999/2000 budget, the PCAB documents and spreadsheets, the CWS/CMS caseload data, and other special studies conducted of the CWS budgetary process. Once analyzed, the electronic files were also subjected to reconstruction in order to incorporate the key workload recommendations discussed later in this report.

In assessing alternative budget methodologies, the states of Florida, New York, Pennsylvania, and Texas were contacted. These states were selected due to their relative comparable size. They represent a mix of state-administered and county-administered child welfare programs. In addition to these states, other studies describing alternative budgetary processes were reviewed (see References section).

Fundamental Budgeting Considerations

In reaching recommendations for this study, a number of considerations were addressed that impacted the review of the budgeting methodology.

External Influences

By nature, child welfare services are provided on demand, not on a scheduled basis. A number of external factors, such as prevailing economic trends, high publicity media cases that draw attention to children's issues, and local community priorities, heavily impact demand for CWS services. Because of this, the development of any service budget needs to have flexibility that accommodates both demand variation and the constraints inherent in providing such services.

Requirements and Responsibilities

The federal government's role is principally to establish overall programmatic requirements and goals, provide funding, and ensure that states comply with federal requirements. The federal requirements are set forth in the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations.

Statewide statutory authority for the child welfare program and service delivery is modeled on federal statutes and regulations, and is contained in Section 16500 et. seq. of the Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC). The California Department of Social Services has state-level responsibility for the programs and interprets the various provisions of the WIC, and publishes

them in statewide policies and procedures, which are contained in Division 31 of the Manual of Policies and Procedures. In meeting this responsibility, CDSS effectively develops the broad requirements, regulations, and funding specifications for the delivery of CWS services at the county level.

The actual responsibility for the administration of programs, staffing levels, and the provision of services in California rests with county government. Because program administration is at the county level, California effectively has 58 different child welfare service approaches for the provision of child welfare services, treatments, and interventions intended to keep children safe from abuse or neglect. Although the provision of services is basically similar throughout the state, the way in which the services are actually delivered may vary from county to county, based on the local community needs and priorities. In some instances, counties take exception to state policies and actively advocate through their staff and local legislators for state funding and policy changes to meet county CWS needs.

Population

California has a very large, highly diverse, and growing population. The state ranges from densely populated urban areas to small rural communities, from agribusiness to manufacturing and high technology development, and from wealth to extreme poverty. State funding allocations and budgeting must operate effectively to assist 10 counties that have populations that exceed a number of states, while at the same time it must also function to assure satisfactory funding levels in counties that have populations of less than 2,000. The budgeting methodology employed by the state must be flexible enough to accommodate these differences in county child welfare populations and needs.

Through the County Welfare Directors Association, and in approaching the provision of child welfare services, the counties have joined into one of four groups depending on the size of the county population and commonality of their constituency. These county groupings are identified in Appendix 7. They range from Los Angeles County with over a third of the total state population (or other counties with major urban populations) to 26 small or very small counties that are chiefly located in the northern portion of the state.

County Child Welfare Funding Policies

The recognition that county funding policies vary throughout the state is essential to the budget process. All counties develop their basic PCAB county welfare service budget to mesh their caseload requirements and local priorities as closely as possible to available state and federal matching funds. A small number of counties, including San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Orange Counties, generally fund their respective CWS program budgets in excess of the required county-to-state funding match. This additional county CWS funding is the result of the high priority that the county places on CWS issues and, therefore, the decision to expend additional county-only resources to fund new or augment existing programs. Depending on local needs and available local resources, the amount of county overmatch for CWS varies from budget year to budget year.

Conversely, a few counties have other county funding priorities and are not able to fully match the allocated state and federal revenue with the result that they do not fully spend all available state CWS funds. This situation was especially true during the past 10 years during the recent economic downturn in California. At the end of the year, a number of counties were not able to fully expend their CWS allocations and returned this funding to the state for reallocation. Some counties were able to temporarily benefit from this situation. But over a long period of time, because of the budget process, those counties that were, or are, not able to fully match their allocation will effectively provide lesser levels of CWS services.

Other counties, like Los Angeles, frequently take exception to state policies and actively advocate through their staff and local legislators for additional state CWS funds and for policy changes to meet county CWS needs.

County Governmental Structure, Approach and Budgeting

Each county has developed a local budget methodology to accommodate the county government organizational structure. Within the county structure, there are differences and variations in county approaches for the provision of child welfare services and county practices and policies. County social services agencies are not all organized and functionally structured on a consistent basis. While traditionally the protective services and child welfare services programs were a part of the human services (welfare) departments, there is a trend in some of the larger counties to

create separate entities at the county level, for the administration of the child protective services programs. Regardless of whether the local department is autonomous or part of a larger entity, the individual departmental budgets are submitted to the county administrative office for review and analysis. Once this process is complete, the departmental budget is incorporated into the overall county budget and is submitted to the local Board of Supervisors for consideration. As previously mentioned, the requirement to match state and federal funding with county funding resources is critical to planning for county CWS program funding.

Demographics/ Non-English Speaking/Handicapped Needs

Demographics have a significant impact on county caseloads. Federal law requires that if a particular language is spoken by more than 5% of the people in a caseload, staff must be competent to communicate with the identified language group in that language. It is estimated that there are 135 languages, other than English, spoken in California homes. The need to hire, train and retain professionally qualified bilingual staff in order to meet federal mandates and deliver culturally appropriate services poses a great challenge to counties. For example, in order to provide competent child welfare services, the Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services employs several bilingual social workers who speak over 10 different languages. Servicing children and families who are unable to communicate in English is time consuming and labor intensive. Also, assisting handicapped children with needs, in many cases, requires more social worker time. The current budget methodology for social worker staffing based on case workloads does not recognize diversity, non-English speaking and handicapped requirements. Social worker staffing in some counties is adversely impacted by the needs of serving these CWS caseloads.

Programmatic Variations

Certain counties operate special or pilot programs which impact how they approach and support county welfare services. Some of these programs operate with specialized grants (e.g., Healthy Start) while others are fully funded demonstration projects. For example, Placer, Santa Barbara, and San Mateo counties operate a System of Care model for CWS in which the program is an integrated service delivery system involving child welfare, health, mental health, and probation

staff. Generally, the Legislature grants the counties the authority to operate these programs on an individual basis and funding frequently is outside the PCAB process.

Funding Sources

The identified funding source and associated programmatic and service delivery requirements may impact the budget methodology. The size of county CWS programs in the larger counties exceeds that of many states.

Three principle funding sources support child welfare service programs in California—federal funds, state general funds, and county funds. Federal funds are provided through the Social Security Act which includes both appropriated funds and entitlement authorizations. Federal funding sources include title IV-A (Emergency Assistance), title IV-B (capped at a set funding level), title IV-E (entitlement), title XIX (Medicaid-related), title XX (Social Services Block Grant), and Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention (CAPIT) Grants. A variety of cost-sharing ratios and limits apply to these funding sources. In California, as a matter of law, the state and counties share the responsibility to match state and local funds to draw down the appropriated federal funds.

State funding programs, in recent years, have been re-engineered to better support adoptions, adoption assistance, family reunification programs, child welfare shelters, and other initiatives and programs. While these programs are outside the scope of budgeting for CWS basic costs, efforts to directly fund such programs should continue to make these programs more efficient and effective.

Training and Caseloads

Among the many challenges that counties face and that impact budgets is the recruitment and retention of professionally trained social work staff to supervise and manage the CWS caseloads. While the state and counties have aggressively worked with university-level schools of social work throughout California to develop programs to attract students to the field of public child welfare, the demand for professionally trained staff exceeds the supply. Training newly hired staff to be able to competently supervise the CWS caseload has also presented a challenge to

counties. Furthermore, newly hired social workers, until they are adequately trained, are generally not able to handle full caseloads.

The current allocation methodology assumes that all social work staff are capable of carrying full caseloads from the day they enter service. With respect to training, this assumption is clearly incorrect. In reality, many newly hired staff attend university-sponsored training academies, or county-sponsored training programs, for 2 to 6 weeks after they are hired. Upon completion of this initial orientation and training, some counties assign the new social workers to training units and assign reduced caseloads for periods of time from 3 to 6 months while they develop competency to work with children and families. Generally, after 6 months of case-carrying experience, a newly hired social worker is expected to have mastered practice issues well enough to manage full caseloads. As a rule, 6 to 12 months is considered the time required for new social workers to develop their proficiency to manage a standard caseload.

Federal Mandates and Reporting Requirements

The current budgeting strategy at the state and county level is constrained by federal funding mandates. Funding for Federal IV-B and IV-E requires full reporting of CWS costs. In addition, the federal government requires: a state plan for child welfare services, a single agency that administers the plan, training of staff and augmentation of caseworkers, a statewide information system, safe and stable family programs developed at the state level, plan provisions for child abuse prevention and treatment, and block grants provided under title IV-A for TANF.

All states that receive federal funds are required to complete quarterly Cost Allocation Reporting forms. Such expenditures of funds are at the county level. Federal requirements stipulate that to qualify for federal funding and reimbursements, workload study data is to be included. Limited sample time studies are completed at the county level as part of the quarterly Cost Allocation and Reporting process. Consolidation and reporting of this information is done by CDSS since the federal government requires claims for reimbursement and other budget-related reports to be submitted by states on an aggregated basis. The budget requirements set by the state CDSS recognize and are consistent with these claiming and reporting requirements.

Cost Analyses

With the current process, the primary basic child welfare cost measurement is the unit cost which reflects the total cost for each child welfare social worker including salary; benefits; direct overhead support costs, such as space, travel, and CWS clerical assistance; the indirect overhead costs, such as county budget and accounting support; and electronic data processing, such as the county hardware, staffing, and training associated with the operation of the CWS/CMS.

Unit Cost

The most recently reported annual, statewide fully loaded unit (basic) cost of a social worker is \$106,754. This data is also maintained on a county-by-county basis. In the latest basic budget allocation, county unit costs range from about \$65,000 to \$153,000.

In response to a question from the legislature about unit cost variation, in January 1995, CDSS submitted a report entitled County Welfare Departments Overhead Cost Survey to the legislature. This report indicated that:

California has chosen a county-administered system for welfare administration in order to locate critical service delivery decisions as close as possible to the people and communities being served. As a result, counties make individual decisions on how best to organize the delivery of services to their constituents. County flexibility in program administration produces variations in county practices which, in turn, result in non-uniform overhead rates. As counties make these decisions, they are faced with constraints that control administrative costs:

County fiscal capacity to generate the required county match for welfare programs plays a strong role in forcing counties to make reasonable decisions in administering our programs;

Counties must comply with a host of regulations and approval requirements which also serve to contain administrative costs...

...Variations in overhead costs are a result of the local environment in which each county must do business and reflect county flexibility in operating delivery systems...

...In the absence of standardized service delivery in welfare programs, the CDSS concludes that capping overhead rates at an arbitrary ceiling is not a viable option for reducing county administrative costs...

More informative measures of the costs of county welfare could be useful. Such measures of CWS costs could include state and individual county average CWS social worker salary and benefits, and other average direct and indirect CWS overhead costs, all of which would total the current fully loaded unit cost.

Preliminary Cost Analysis by Case Type

By using Screening/Hotline (ERA), Emergency Response (ER), Family Maintenance (FM), Family Reunification (FR), Permanent Placement (PP) case loads, estimated social worker caseload standards, and summary program cost data, a preliminary estimate of CWS costs per case per month can be approximated on a general statewide basis.

A preliminary cost analysis from FY 99/00 budget and related caseload data shows that the statewide monthly total cost of servicing a CWS case is about \$371 per month. Monthly servicing of an ER case is about \$662, an FM case about \$307, an FR case about \$387, and a PP case about \$198. Emergency assistance responses, while not caseloads, are estimated to cost about \$33 each. (See Appendix 9.)

This preliminary cost analysis data is of limited value and does not clarify trends, county variation, or other factors that drive CWS costs.

f) Core Workload Standards Focus Groups

All California counties were invited to send CWS field staff to participate in setting workload standards. The guidelines for participants called for workers and supervisors, and an occasional administrator, with expertise in their program areas. Most counties sent participants, and most of the participants were supervisors and workers, with a few administrators. Twenty-eight focus groups with a maximum size of 25 members each met, half in Los Angeles and half in Sacramento, to set standards for seven program areas. Each program area could include several units of service. For example, Family Reunification included Investigation/New Allegations, Work with Children in Care/Voluntary, Work with Children in Care/Court, Services to Parents

with Children in Care/Voluntary, and Services to Parents with Children in Care/Court. For a review of the materials used by the focus groups, see Appendix 6.

There were two focus groups in northern California and two in southern California for each program area. These areas were: Prevention and Community-Based Collaboration, Emergency Response and Dependency Investigation, Family Maintenance, Family Reunification, Permanent Placement, Out-of-Home Care and Licensing, and Other (including Out-of-Town Inquiries, Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children, and Non-CWS Home Studies). Additional areas, such as Adoptions, will use data from sources other than the SB 2030 workload study to set workload standards. For a complete list of the units of service considered, see the list of standards in the “Study Results and Findings” section of this report. The groups began work on November 29 and ended on December 3, 1999, with each group allowed up to four hours to complete its assigned tasks.

The goal of the groups was to set reasonable workload standards that indicate how long it should take staff to complete their work in order to achieve optimal results. The standards should make it possible for staff to achieve outcomes in conformance with law and best practice, with reasonable workloads.

Each group was led by two facilitators. The participants reviewed the workload study data to determine if staff should be spending more or less time on their duties for each unit of service than the data indicate they are spending under current circumstances. They used a structured format to look at the units of service and tasks to determine where staff have been cutting corners, thus spending less time than they should, or where they have been spending more time than they should. Because the participants are more familiar with caseloads than workloads, a caseload reality check was performed. After the standards (hours per month per unit of service) were estimated, the facilitators mathematically translated the standards into caseloads for the groups.

Every task for every unit of service did not have to be analyzed, just the ones where the group felt corners are being cut or too much or too little time is spent. However, all units of service were considered to be in this category. The group documented their reasons for setting standards

that are different from what the workload study data indicate staff are doing under current conditions.

The standards setting process included the following steps:

- Participants reviewed data related to the topic of the focus group from the workload study on how much time per month, on the average, staff are currently spending on each of the units of service per case.
- The group members were provided material on policy requirements associated with each program area.
- The group discussed the results of the workload study and related policy that may not be fully implemented due to constraints of time or resources. The group was asked to come to a consensus regarding the minimum time required to meet policy requirements and to justify their conclusions. In a few cases where consensus was not possible, a vote was taken to determine the standard.
- The group was also asked to estimate the time that would be required to provide optimal best practice services. The group was again asked to reach consensus and justify its decisions.
- A few other comments were also documented (e.g., comments about the CWS/CMS downtime).

The product of the process was a list of units of service with standards/expected time for each. The standards were expressed as a range. The expectation is that staff will spend an amount of time completing each unit of service between the upper and lower ends of the range, which will reflect the minimum and optimum times. In addition to the standards, justification was provided for any changes from the times being spent under current circumstances, as indicated in the workload study data. The justification was documented in terms of what staff would be expected to do differently if provided staffing at the level of the standards.

Since standards for the units of service in each program area were set by two groups in Los Angeles and two groups in Sacramento, the result was four scores/standards for each unit of service. These standards were reviewed by project staff, extreme scores were dropped, and the four standards were then averaged to achieve one final standard for each unit of service. A 225% rule was used to delete extremes. The top and bottom scores of the four, for each unit of service, were analyzed and any standard/score that was 225% or more over or under the next nearest score was dropped. The result of this cleaning process was that only one unit of service had extreme scores, and it had both a high and a low score that met the criteria for extreme. Thus the high and the low scores for that unit of service were dropped. This result reflects the remarkable

consistency between the four groups for each program area. With the one exception, they all came up with scores (standards) very close to one another. See the final standards in the “Study Results and Findings” section of this report.