Chapter Highlights

Conditions of Children in California

Michael W. Kirst
Project Director

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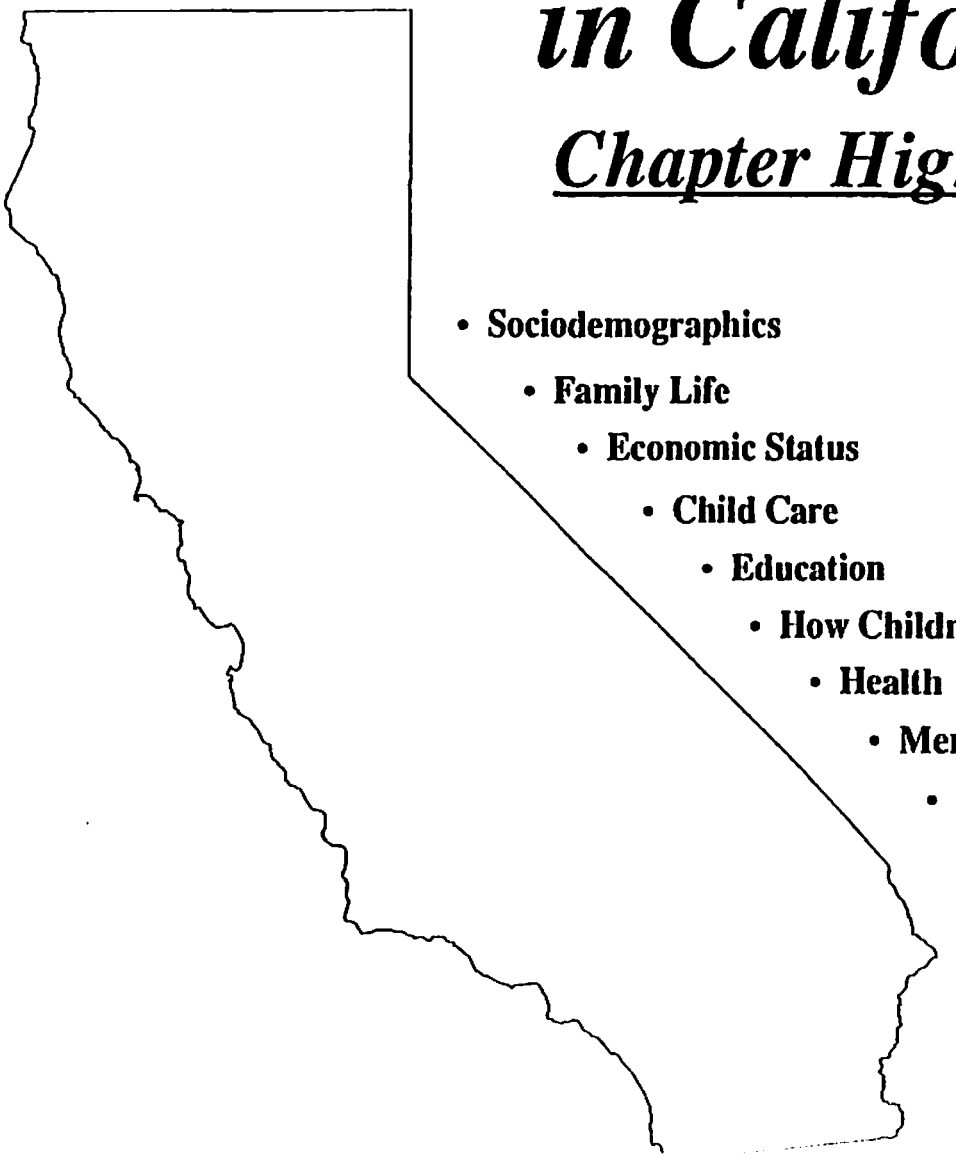

- Sociodemographics
- Family Life
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- Child Care
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- How Children Spend Their Time
- Health
- Mental Health
- Child Abuse and Child Welfare Services
- Juveniles, Delinquency, and the Law
- Income Support Programs
- Policies for Children with Multiple Needs
- State Policy Making for Children

Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE)

Conditions of Children in California

Chapter Highlights

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Policy Analysis for California Education

Policy Analysis for California Education, PACE, is a university-based research center focusing on issues of state educational policy and practice. PACE is located in the Schools of Education at the University of California, Berkeley and Stanford University. It is funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and directed jointly by James W. Guthrie and Michael W. Kirst. PACE operates satellite centers in Sacramento and Southern California. These are directed by Gerald C. Hayward (Sacramento) and Allan R. Odden (University of Southern California).

PACE efforts center on five tasks: (1) collecting and distributing objective information about the conditions of education in California, (2) analyzing state educational policy issues and the policy environment, (3) evaluating school reforms and state educational practices, (4) providing technical support to policy makers, and (5) facilitating discussion of educational issues.

The PACE research agenda is developed in consultation with public officials and staff. In this way, PACE endeavors to address policy issues of immediate concern and to fill the short-term needs of decision makers for information and analysis.

Chapter 1
Introduction
Michael S. Wald

- This report is an attempt to assemble a set of social indicators that suggest an overall portrait of the quality of life of California's children. It synthesizes material not readily available to policy-makers, points out gaps in available data, and where appropriate, offers limited policy recommendations.
- Data are included on physical and mental health, physical safety, sexual behavior, and academic achievement. Because children are largely dependent upon settings and services controlled by adults, the report also attempts to evaluate the conditions of the settings in which children develop– families, day care facilities, schools, and neighborhoods– and addresses the systems that serve children, such as health and welfare services, justice systems, and private organizations.
- Recent polls indicate that three out of four American adults feel that problems facing children are worse today than in decades past. Most think that parents and the schools are not doing a satisfactory job of child-rearing. Moreover, the chief executives of 225 American corporations have expressed concern about the likelihood of "an expanding educational underclass."
- In spite of these perceptions, it is clear that most children in the nation and in California are healthier, wealthier, and better schooled than were their earlier counterparts. Is there really cause for concern? Is the condition of children better or worse? Or both?
- The size, composition, and trends of California's changing population are emphasized throughout the report. In the next ten years California will add one and a half million to the present population of seven million children, an increase of 20 percent. Children from ethnic or racial "minority" groups will constitute an increasing majority of California children.
- There is a growing disparity, largely along racial/ethnic lines, between advantaged and disadvantaged children. Though the economic well-being of most California children increased considerably in the decade before 1970, the gap in income between the poorest families with children and other families with children has grown in the past ten years.
- Inconsistency in the quality of publicly financed, institutional child care is another theme in this volume. In addition to a lack of qualitative uniformity, it appears that public systems that serve poor children are in worse condition than those that serve middle class or wealthy children.
- A final theme that emerges is that California lacks any systematic means of gathering data about children's well-being and of establishing, coordinating, and evaluating programs designed to meet children's needs. We know particularly little about the almost uncharted private sector of children's services, or about the lives of children between ages one and four.
- Except for schooling, child care, and some preventive health programs, most state policy is directed at children with manifest and severe problems. While there are good reasons to target programs at those most immediately in need, such programs commonly provide too little, too late really to improve the condition of children. Despite widespread recognition that a number of preventive programs are both cost efficient and best for children, such programs remain scarce.
- California appears to be in a period of retrenchment in its commitment to children. From the 1940s until the 1970s, this state exerted national leadership in developing attitudes toward children's needs, developing novel responses to the challenges of children's health care, day care, delinquency, abuse, and neglect. While California retains leadership in some areas, that leadership has faded over the past ten years. Despite the changing contexts in which children live, few new initiatives have been mounted on behalf of California's children.

- The new problems confronting California's children reflect the changing family structure, the impact of immigration, and the emergence of a small group of very disadvantaged parents whose children are at great risk of inadequate physical, emotional, academic, and social development. These new problems will require new policy initiatives, and perhaps new structures for the development of public policy. This report is intended to help guide policy-makers who would venture in these directions.

Chapter 2
A Sociodemographic Portrait
John W. Evans, Michael S. Wald, Claire Smrekar, Marc J. Ventresca, with Laura Walkush

- The well-being of California's huge child population is of increasing importance to the nation. At present, one in every nine American children is a Californian. Ten years from now, one in every eight children will live in this state.
- The child population in Los Angeles county alone totals more than two and one-quarter million persons—more than the child populations of over forty states and more than the *total* populations of twenty states. Los Angeles county is home to more than a third of the children in California.
- California's share of the nation's minority children is particularly large. One in every three Hispanic American children lives in California, and two in five Asian children live here. In ten years, half the children in the state will be Hispanic or Asian, with non-Hispanic whites comprising a shrinking proportion of the child population.
- The California children of the late 1970s, together with immigrant children, comprise a larger young cohort that will dramatically shift the numbers of children in particular age groups. In ten years, the youngest age groups may begin to decrease in size, even as the number of teenagers continues to increase for some time.
- Despite their burgeoning numbers, California's children comprise only one fourth of the state population, whereas they were one third of the population twenty years ago. Moreover, the percentage of households containing children is declining, due to some decline in the percentage who ever marry, some increase in the percentage of childless couples, and a change in the total age distribution.
- California's child population is so different from the nation's in size and ethnic diversity that federal social welfare policies are not optimally suited to this state.
- The well-being of children in this state depends increasingly upon the willingness of those without children to commit public and private resources to children. Failing this, the resources available to each child will decline.

Chapter 3
Family Life
Michael S. Wald, John W. Evans, Claire Smrekar, and Marc J. Ventresca

- Today's children live in more diverse family settings. Increases in divorce, in single mothers, and in alternative parenting arrangements have altered the traditional family lifestyle. There is evidence that divorce increases the risk that a child will experience problems in academic, emotional, and social development.
- Family conditions have a major impact on children's emotional well-being, and on their scholastic and social success. While the impact upon children of various family influences are complex, two salient factors emerge from the data as significant influences on a child's well-being: family structure and teenage parenthood.

- The average number of children in a household has declined. Seventy-seven percent of all families with children under 18 have one or two children; only 23 percent have three or more. Black, Hispanic, and Southeast Asian families tend to have more children than others.
- Although 75 percent of children live with two parents (including stepparents), 50 percent will live in a single-parent household sometime before the age of 18. The estimated average length of stay in a single-parent home will be six years.
- Major causes of changes in family structure are an increase in divorce and a rise in the numbers of births of children to single mothers.
- Divorce rates have doubled since 1960. One third of the children in California will experience parental divorce before age sixteen. Divorce is often attended by economic and psychological pressures that diminish the parent's supervision of children, and may thus contribute to school failure, drug and alcohol abuse, and early sexual activity.
- One in four California children is born to an unmarried mother. More than half of black children are born to single mothers.
- The income of single mothers is substantially lower than that of married parents. Almost half of all single mothers live at or below the poverty level.
- Despite widespread concern about the conditions of children born to teenage mothers, there is little research on the progress of these children. However, available evidence indicates that teenage parenthood is often detrimental to the parents and to their children.

Chapter 4
Economic Status
Michael S. Wald, John W. Evans, and Marc J. Ventresca

- The economic status of children depends on several factors: 1) family income, 2) number of children in the family, 3) proportion of family income spent by parents for their children, 4) amount society invests in children, and 5) amount of money children can earn from work.
- Between 1959 and 1969, the economic well-being of most children increased considerably. Since 1969, and especially since 1979, economic well-being of children has deteriorated.
- More than one in every five California children– 1.78 million children– lives in a family whose income is below the federal poverty level. Many more children live just slightly above the poverty line. The number of children living in poverty doubled between 1969 and 1987.
- In 1981, the proportion of children in poverty was lower in California than in the nation as a whole. By 1986, California's percentage of poor children was higher than the nation's. As a group children are worse off than adults– since 1969 there has been a greater percentage of children than adults living in poverty.
- The future number of children in poverty is likely to increase in California, largely as a result of increases in divorce, single parents, inadequate educational preparation, and low paying jobs for people reaching their child-bearing years.
- The income disparity between those children living in the poorest families and children living in other families has widened in the past 10 years.
- Poor families are disproportionately female-headed. Families headed by single mothers are four times more likely to be poor than are two-parent families. Three-fifths of female-headed

families with children under six are living in poverty. But poverty rates for children in California would have increased between 1969 and 1984 even without an increase in single-parent families.

- Working single mothers, most of whom do not receive child support from the father, earn wages lower than those of other women. Their wages generally are not high enough to raise them above the poverty level.
- Most California children (52%) in poverty live in two-parent families in which at least one parent works.
- For a family of four or more, in 1988, if *both* parents worked full-time at the minimum wage, their combined income still fell below the poverty line. Families with younger family heads, those under 30, and especially those under 25, are much more likely to be poor.
- Largely as a result of immigration, the face of California poverty differs from that of the nation as a whole. That face is far less black and far more Hispanic. And the family conditions of California's poor children are especially varied. Typically, the poor among California's Hispanic and Asian children live with two parents, poor white children live with a divorced mother, and poor black children live with a mother who never married. Hispanic poverty is primarily caused by low wages even if both parents work. White poverty comprises the largest subgroup of children in poverty nationally (44%), but only 26% in California.
- The children of the poor are three times more likely to die in infancy, four times more likely to become pregnant as teenagers, and are more likely to suffer serious illness, abuse, neglect, and to drop out of school than are their non-poor counterparts. Family income thus serves as a useful proxy for a child's well-being.
- Many poor children are not receiving the benefits of state and federal programs designed to help them. Though a greater proportion of poor children are covered by AFDC in California than in most states, still less than half of eligible families receive AFDC income. Moreover, a smaller percentage of poor children receives the benefits of food stamps, free school lunches and public housing in California than in the nation as a whole.
- Because the composition of California's poor differs from national norms, with so many California Hispanic and Asian poor, federal policies are not optimally suited to this state. Moreover, even state policies toward the poor may not take into account the great ethnic diversity. Most poor Hispanic families, for example, will not be assisted by increased welfare payments, but could move out of poverty through higher-paying jobs.

Chapter 5
Child Care and Early Childhood Programs
W. Norton Grubb

- Less than a third (28.6 percent) of California families have the father working full time and the mother at home. Approximately 1.14 million California children are in some type of child care, though only 15 percent are in child care centers. Many parents assemble patchwork arrangements, combining their work schedules and small amounts of care by relatives, so that their children need not be in formal child care. In families where both parents work, one-third have at least one part-time worker.
- Very little is known about the quality of child care. Most parents prefer care in their own homes, but often find this is difficult to arrange. Resolution of the ideological debate about quality and adequacy of care seems unlikely in the absence of consensus concerning the proper goals of child care.
- Almost all parents who use child care services report that they are satisfied with the quality of the arrangements. However, 21 percent of households using child care reported problems

severe enough to change arrangements. About 48 percent of those who changed used family day care.

- In 1986 the average cost of full-time child care for pre-school children was $3,023 a year. For a family of four at the federal poverty level, 50 weeks of care for one child consumed 27 percent of income, while two children in care pushed the family's child care bill above half of income. Even moderate-income families are hard-pressed by child care costs.
- The increase in California's children (ages 6-14), and the entrance of more women into the work force, makes it likely that demand for child care will increase.
- California's child care system and early childhood programs are likely to grow increasingly inadequate both in scope and quality, despite this state's leading role in the development of policy in this area. In the view of most observers and advocates, the current system is plagued by disarray and deficiencies.
- Lack of information or availability appears to prevent a significant number of parents from using centers or family day care. Other families encounter insurmountable problems with cost, scheduling and location. Public programs serve less than 9 percent of eligible poor children.
- California now faces a clash between increasing demand and inadequate funding for child care. The discovery of new child care needs—after school care, infant care, and care for handicapped children—exacerbates the feeling that public subsidies are inadequate. Moreover, real resources committed to publicly-subsidized programs have fallen 20 percent in the past ten years. These declining expenditures appear to have resulted in fewer children being served, as well as in the deterioration of the quality and evaluation of services.
- Limits on local property taxes have increased the state funding burden. California has had a system of centralized funding and diversified programs. It now seems appropriate, however, for the state to adopt the reverse: diversified funding and consolidated programs.
- Every report on children has called for an integrated program of children's services and a coherent state policy. But administrative divisions and the "California model" of highly targeted child care programs make such an approach difficult.
- The search for alternative revenue sources has generated many creative efforts to increase support among local governments and corporations. Valuable as such efforts are, they cannot now generate substantial revenues for child care. Effective revenue diversification would require changes in federal policy and in state law, and a new consciousness on the part of corporations and other private donors.

Chapter 6
Education
James W. Guthrie

- On average, California students daily spend more waking hours in school (approximately 15,000 before graduating) than in any other single endeavor. Even so, this is about one third less time in school than children in many foreign nations spend.
- Children find their schools and classrooms crowded, and the education system as a whole wobbles under the weight of trying to raise revenues, construct classrooms, and train teachers for the state's large (5 million) and growing number of students.
- The racial and ethnic diversity of children in California schools is unprecedented. Certainly no other state, and probably no other nation, has students from as wide an immigrant spectrum as does California. Approximately 16 percent of public school students were born in another nation.
- Despite the breadth statewide of cultures and races, many children, and most white children, attend local elementary schools and classrooms with students like themselves. This racial isolation occurs primarily because of income disparities

and residential housing patterns, not because of a deliberate state policy.

- Large and growing proportions of California's school children are from social backgrounds frequently linked with low academic achievement. Almost one quarter of them are from poor households and one seventh are not proficient in English.
- California's children attend classes with many more classmates than do other American children. These large classes reduce the time for individualized instruction.
- California invests only minimally in children's schooling. The state spends less per pupil than the national average, less than other major industrialized states, and a stunning $2,500 (almost $75,000 per classroom) less than New York state. However, the huge numbers of children involved statewide, plus constitutional impediments to added spending, render it unlikely that public investment will be increased in the short run.
- Academic achievement of California's top-performing students compares favorably with that of their counterparts throughout the nation. Black and Hispanic school achievement, while still below average, has been increasing. Elementary students study and perform well in standard academic subjects, e.g., reading, mathematics, and written language. Secondary students increasingly enroll in rigorous academic courses.
- These favorable facts mask unsettling conditions. Only slightly more than a quarter of high school graduates have taken courses permitting them to attend state universities. California students have great difficulty with problem solving and the more complex higher order skills.
- High secondary school dropout rates doggedly persist, and the academic performance of large numbers of secondary school children is so poor that they are unlikely to participate effectively, either as workers or as citizens. Despite these conditions, students, when surveyed, express substantial satisfaction with their schools.

Chapter 7
How Children Spend Their Time and How Community Factors Affect Their Well-Being

Donald E. Miller and John B. Orr, with Marc J. Ventresca and Claire Smrekar

- Neighborhoods shape the life of the child. They are the child's universe. And the nature of that universe—rural or urban, homogeneous or cosmopolitan, nurturing or forbidding—in large measure determines the character of that child's social life and access to recreational and educational resources.
- Children's leisure activities are also affected by social and economic factors such as social class, family status, parental values, ethnicity, physical health, and personal values.
- Between one-fifth and one-third of school-age youth belong to voluntary youth organizations. Many of the functions previously performed by the family are now assumed by formal youth organizations.
- The constituency of youth organizations is changing. Children from low-income and working families are increasingly targeted, and many single-sex organizations have gone coed.
- Many children spend significant amounts of time participating in organized sports programs. Among Oakland sixth-graders, for example, half of the girls and almost three-fourths of the boys are active in at least one sports program. Teenage boys spend about an hour a day in these activities, girls about half an hour.
- Girls today find greater opportunities for participation in organized sports. As one measure of this trend, two girls for every three boys now earn a varsity letter, as compared with the one for every three who earned letters twenty years ago.
- Recreational participation suffers from limited availability of facilities in some parts of the state, and from limited accessibility in other places. In Los Angeles, Hispanic children find

themselves with a surplus of baseball diamonds and a drastic undersupply of soccer fields. Elsewhere in the state, parents worry about the safety of recreation facilities and of the neighborhoods in which the facilities are located.

- California libraries are struggling to adapt to demographic and social trends affecting children. Though many immigrant children remain unfamiliar with the local library, their sheer diversity requires that in San Francisco, for example, children's materials be collected in 37 languages. Throughout the state, children of some working parents are using libraries as de facto after-school day care centers.
- Religion plays an important role in the lives of half of America's teenagers. In the western U.S., one third of high school seniors attend services once a week or more, while an additional sixth go once or twice a month. Black teenagers are more active in religion than are white teenagers.
- Children spend more waking hours watching television than they spend in any other single activity over the course of childhood. Black children watch considerably more television than do white children.
- Youth devote about one-fifth as much time to music listening as they do to TV watching.
- A greater proportion of youth works today than ever before. Two out of three high school students do part-time work, the major out-of-school activity of older teens. A fourth of all seniors work at least 26 hours per week, with possible detriment to their studies. Girls and boys work about the same number of hours, but their jobs remain sex-stereotyped.
- Youth work mainly at minimum wage jobs and do so to have spending money. The disposability of teenage income reflects an intensification of teen consumerism.
- Many of the activities in which children spend their time are made possible by local governments and by the voluntary sector. If opportunity is not equitably available, this reliance on localities and voluntarism may increase the disparity of resources across neighborhoods, cities, and counties. Children from low-income areas are thus more likely to lack the variety and quality of programs and facilities publicly available to children in more affluent areas.
- The well-being and enrichment of children is best assured by the availability of a wide diversity of recreational and educational facilities and programs.

Chapter 8
Health
Neal Halfon, Wendy Jameson, Claire Brindis, Philip R. Lee, Paul W. Newacheck, Carol Korenbrot, Jacquelyn McCroskey, and Robert Isman

- Medical and public health developments in this century have substantially improved children's health. Infant mortality has declined dramatically; treatment of childhood diseases has improved and immunization has virtually eliminated several previously common childhood diseases.
- The vast majority of children in California are considered to be in excellent or good health by their parents. Fewer than 10 percent of California children are considered to have severe health problems and/or chronic disabilities that limit their activities. But parents of poor children are two or three times more likely to report their children are in poor or fair health.
- The conditions of children's health requires more than an examination of diseases and impaired functioning. The effects of poverty, poor nutrition, parental neglect, adult drug and alcohol abuse, child abuse, and risk-taking behavior are currently endangering children.

- Accidents, suicide, drugs, and violence have increased in importance relative to infectious diseases as problem areas. In the 5-14 age group, intentional and unintentional injuries rank as the leading cause of death. Adolescents are the one group in society with an *increasing* mortality rate. But, interventions are difficult to identify, target, and sustain with sufficient intensity to make a difference.
- Existing categorical programs do not adequately address the health needs of growing numbers of very high risk children (children in foster homes, teenage mothers and their babies, drug exposed children, and homeless children). Moreover, the fragmented delivery of many health and related social services makes multiagency integrated services exceedingly difficult.
- There are no clearly defined or agreed upon health goals. A revised policy would define good health, gather data related to children and family health, conduct a needs assessment, and propose programs for addressing such needs.
- White children, on the average, visit a doctor more than one-and-a-half times more often than do minority children. This lack of preventive care may lead to more serious ailments that must be treated in hospitals or by other expensive interventions.
- California has traditionally had a low rate of infant mortality compared to other states, but has fallen in rank recently (7th in 1970 to 14th in 1985). In 1985, the infant mortality rate in California actually rose. This increase may be related to health care gaps or changes in adult behavior such as drug abuse.
- Infant deaths due to prematurity and birth defects have three clear "risk factors"—race, low socioeconomic status, and low level of education. Black infant mortality rates are nearly twice that of whites.
- A substantial proportion of infant mortality is preventable, particularly through the prevention of low weight births by improving the content, access and utilization of prenatal services to low-income women who are at high risk of having low birth weight babies.
- Unemployment and changes in employment patterns (for example, small, service-oriented businesses) have left many women uninsured. Women in families with incomes below the poverty level, while constituting only 17 percent of reproductive age, constitute 37 percent of the uninsured, even when those with Medicaid are included among the insured. Black women are 1.5 times as likely as non-Hispanic whites to be uninsured. To the extent that low-income births will rise, birth outcomes can be expected to worsen until women have access to effective prenatal care.
- Although a 1987-88 survey of drug and alcohol use among California students found the percentage of seventh- , ninth- , and eleventh-grade students who have used these substances has declined, the numbers still remain high. More than forty percent (42.4%) of eleventh graders reported that they had tried illegal drugs and 61.5% said they had been drunk at least once by the time they were age 16. Nearly half (45.8%) of all eleven year olds said they had tried alcohol; 10% said they had gotten drunk.
- The numbers about cigarette smoking are more encouraging. Nearly three-quarters of eleventh graders (73.3%) reported in 1987-88 that they had never smoked a cigarette.
- There is some evidence education programs may be having an effect. On the 1988 survey of students, 63.1% of eleventh graders said they had learned in school that drugs and alcohol are harmful.
- Drugs and alcohol continue to be serious problems, especially in poor and minority communities. For adolescents confronted with school failure, an unsupportive home environment, and perceptions of few life options, use of drugs and alcohol often present a too-attractive alternative.
- Sexual activity has increased among American adolescents since the early 1970s. National statistics show the average age at first sexual intercourse is 17.1 for females and 16.5 for

males. By age 20, three out of four females and five out of six males will have had sexual intercourse at least once.

- California has the second highest teenage pregnancy rate in the country: for 15-19 year olds, it is 143 per 1,000. One in ten of California's pregnant teenagers did not receive any prenatal medical care or did not begin care until the third trimester.
- In 1985, California's public costs for families begun by the first births occurring while the woman was a teenager were $3.08 billion dollars. Had these births been delayed until the mother was 20 years old, 40 percent—$1.23 billion dollars—would have been saved in 1985.
- The California Immunization Program combines the efforts of the California Department of Health, local health departments, and the private sector to prevent, control, and eliminate vaccine-preventable diseases.
- Currently, over 96 percent of California's kindergartners have received adequate immunizations for measles, rubella, and mumps. DPT and polio vaccination rates are slightly lower because of difficulties in making sure the child received the whole series.
- Stronger laws more strictly enforced, such as those requiring students in grades K-12 to show adequate immunization, have been a major cause of higher immunization levels, although poorer children and minorities are still at greater risk of not being immunized.
- In the last decade the cost of completely immunizing a single child through public vaccination programs has risen an astonishing 700 percent from $5.00 to $32.00, largely as a result of manufacturers responding to skyrocketing liability insurance costs.
- Added immunization programs should be targeted to high-risk groups—toddlers, teens, and families in poverty. New immigrants continue to suffer linguistic and cultural barriers that inhibit their access to immunization.
- Although the vast majority of children have access to adequate quantities of nutritious food and do not go to bed hungry, there are indicators of a growing problem of malnutrition and hunger.
- California supplements federal food programs with state funds and serves children through programs like Food Stamps and School Lunch. In 1985, 60 percent of the members of households participating in the Food Stamp Program were children. Food stamp benefit levels, however, have not kept pace with the inflationary increases in food costs.
- Dental caries and periodontal diseases are the most prevalent diseases affecting California children. Poor and minority groups have much greater prevalence of dental decay than their wealthier, non-minority peers. Data from the 1983 National Health Interview Survey indicate that poor and minority children were significantly less likely to have made a dental visit in the past year, and were far more likely to have never seen a dentist, than higher income and white children.
- Community water fluoridation remains the most cost effective method available for caries prevention. While nationally 67 percent of community water supplies are fluoridated, only 17 percent of those in California are. Almost all major U.S. cities have fluoridated water; however, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Jose, and Sacramento remain unfluoridated.
- Half of dental decay can be expected to occur by kindergarten, yet only 10,000 preschool age children are currently enrolled in a state program to prevent tooth decay.
- Although the proportion of the population with dental insurance has increased substantially over the last 20 years, poor and minority group children still rank low. Medicaid has been ineffective in alleviating this problem. Medicaid children were only two-thirds as likely to receive a dental examination as children in general and only slightly more than half as likely as the average privately insured child.

- The lack of availability and accessibility of dental services in California is worsening. MediCal needs to be restructured to include more dentist participation, alternative funding mechanisms, and publicly-funded dental care programs where no providers exist to serve children who need care.
- The Child Health Disabilities Program (CHDP), which offers health assessment screening services, including a health history, physical examination, immunizations, vision and hearing test, nutritional assessment, and a variety of screening and lab tests, serves only 22 percent of the eligible children.
- Development disturbances can be physical, mental, emotional, or a combination of these. California has two main systems for delivering developmental services: special education in the schools and assistance provided by the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS).
- California's schools provide special education for 400,000 mildly to severely handicapped students.
- DDS clients have specific limiting conditions that are not primarily physical in nature but stem from problems in the central nervous system; for example, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and autism. Children with severe physical disabilities are generally served by California Children's Services (CCS).
- CCS considers almost all catastrophic physical conditions eligible. Financial eligibility is more liberal in California than in many other states. Currently, children are eligible for CCS services if family income is below $40,000 a year or if medical care expenses exceed 20 percent of family income.
- In the last two years, CCS caseloads have increased substantially, from an annualized rate of 74,000 during the first part of 1984 to one of 87,000 during the first part of 1986. However, expenditures for CCS have not kept pace with increased caseloads.
- The United States has not developed a health care system that can guarantee health care to all citizens. The coupling of health insurance with employment means that economic trends, such as rising unemployment, will increase the number of uninsured children.
- MediCal is the primary insurer for children in poverty. MediCal currently serves 1.5 million children and has standards of eligibility and benefits that are generous in comparison to other states—California provides 32 of the 33 optional services that states can elect to provide under federal regulations. However, MediCal children often do not receive quality care in comparison to those with private sector insurance.

Chapter 9
Mental Health
Donna Weston, Linnea Klee, and Neal Halfon

- Rapidly changing social conditions have dramatically affected the range of cultural and family situations that may be associated with mental health problems. Although these risk factors are still not adequately understood, changing family structures, economic hardship, genetic and biological factors, and the dynamics of "dysfunctional" families are important factors.
- Identification, diagnosis, and treatment efficacy for psychological and emotional problems remain highly uncertain, with effectiveness data scarce and difficult to interpret. Data on frequency of different types of problems and disorders, age of onset, severity, and other prevalence data are largely unavailable.
- Estimates of severe emotional disturbance range from about 2 percent, or 142,000 children, to 8 percent, or 568,000 children. Nonetheless, *fewer than 10,000* children and adolescents in California's public schools have been identified as severely emotionally disturbed.

- More than 50,000 California children and adolescents are in foster care. The prevalence of emotional, behavioral, and developmental problems among these children is common. Studies report between 30 and 80 percent of foster children examined for psychological problems to be moderately to severely impaired.
- Abused children often come from highly stressed, multiproblem families, warranting a family and child treatment focus.
- Alcohol use in pregnancy can lead to mental retardation and fetal alcohol syndrome in offspring. An increasing number of babies are being born to women using drugs, particularly crack/cocaine, resulting in a broad range of developmental problems for newborns.
- Public policy has not been targeted to the establishment of a continuum of mental health services to meet the continuum of need. Services are heavily weighted toward expensive inpatient hospitalization and are not balanced with improved residential, outpatient, and preventive services.
- Determining the expenditures for children's mental health services is difficult because funds for children are intermingled with resources for adults. Despite the broad array of government and private funding, gaps in resources and services remain.

Chapter 10
Child Abuse and Child Welfare Services
Richard P. Barth and Marianne Berry

- Increases in reports of child abuse have strained the welfare system. In 1987, California investigated 61,090 reports of child abuse. Between 1981 and 1988, reports of physical, sexual, and emotional child abuse rose 212% in California.
- Two out of three families reported for child abuse receive no preventive, interventive, or follow-up services. (The state currently has no common definition of "substantiated child abuse.")
- Recipients of child welfare services in California are disproportionately members of minority groups. More than half the families whose children are under court-ordered protection at home are minorities. Black children are reported for abuse and receive formal services at twice the rate expected by their proportion in the population.
- Homeless children have no predictable place in the child welfare system. Since the mid-1980s, the focus on children at risk of physical and sexual abuse has left the increasing numbers of homeless and neglected children virtually without child welfare services.
- California's policy of family reunification, coupled as it is with inadequate support and insufficient follow-up services, fails adequately to protect children from subsequent abuse.
- Each year, one out of every one hundred California children spends time in foster care. In 1988, the number of California children in foster or residential care reached 44,337.
- Despite the large number of children in foster care, California still has an inadequate number of foster care families. Without increased funding for foster care, the quantity and quality of foster parents will continue to decline as the numbers and needs of children increase.
- Studies show that adopted children fare better in the long run than do children placed in foster care. Nevertheless, compared to other states, California has a smaller proportion of adoptions and a larger proportion of foster care placements. Only 30% of children in foster care in 1985-86 were recommended for adoption.
- Assuming no changes in the existing level of services, and assuming that homelessness, substance abuse, and child abuse and neglect remain at their current level of severity, the quality of children's lives will diminish.
- In order to make informed policy and practice decisions, California needs a statewide data management system that

tracks individual children across time and services plus a system of key indicators of specific harms suffered by children and critical conditions of family life.

Chapter 11
Children, Delinquency, and the Law
Thomas David and Marc J. Ventresca

- Many indicators and measures of criminal activity among youths have posted steady declines since the early 1970s. Yet the youth population incarcerated in state and county facilities shows substantial and continuing increases, as do other system indicators as the average period of incarceration, length of probation, and average probation load.
- From 1980 to 1985, the statistics on correctional populations show significant increases. The number of juveniles on probation rose by 66 percent; juveniles in county detention centers, camps, and ranches grew by 24 percent, and the juvenile population of the Youth Authority grew by 66 percent. In all, there were 85,941 Californians under age 18 who were being controlled by various state and local correctional agencies. The proportion of California youth under correctional supervision increased by 50 percent between 1980 and 1985.
- These data portray a system that is becoming more formal, more restrictive and more oriented towards punishment. In addition, probation caseloads have increased to levels that make adequate supervision unrealistic and county and state facilities face chronic and severe overcrowding.
- Juvenile justice in California is not an integrated or coordinated system, but rather a collection of agencies tied together for the processing of juvenile offenders. There is often a lack of linkage between prevention programs, corrections, probation, and social support services.
- Policies vary greatly among counties. Some counties have no local facilities and commit juveniles with low-level offenses to state facilities with hardened criminals.
- California incarcerates a higher proportion of its juvenile offenders than do other states with comparable large and heterogeneous youth populations.
- Data on the characteristics and conditions of youths in the juvenile justice system are rudimentary and largely administratively driven. There is a paucity of information about access to educational opportunities, training and rehabilitative programs, and about the quality of life of incarcerated youths. The diversity in legal definitions of delinquency, inaccuracies in counting, and inconsistency in enforcement make it difficult to fix a "true" incidence of delinquency itself.
- Contrary to popular belief, fewer California youths had contact with the legal system and juvenile arrests actually declined through much of the 1980s. Arrests have increased slightly in recent years, paced by increased drug arrest rates (22 percent), especially for narcotics (70 percent). Nevertheless, rates remain at levels well below those of the 1970s.
- As a group, juveniles in California are 45 percent more likely to be arrested than are adults. Variations occur, however, among specific crime categories. Property crimes account for the majority (62 percent) of juvenile felony arrests. Juveniles account for 26 percent of all property-related felony arrests.
- Boys accounted for 77 percent of all juvenile arrests. Most juvenile arrests are white (53 percent), with Hispanics 28 percent and blacks 25 percent.
- Older youth, boys, certain racial and ethnic minorities, poor and urban youth are all more likely to be arrested. But substantial variations exist by county, reflecting variations in the structure and practice of juvenile justice, as well as differences in county youth populations.

- The discretion exercised by law enforcement agencies and individuals (police officers, etc.) in deciding which individuals should be entered into the system and for what behaviors further contribute to variation in practice.
- The average length of stay in the California Youth Authority has increased from 12.7 months in 1975 to 17.4 months in 1988.
- Policy makers and the public at large have not reached a consensus on how to improve juvenile justice. Opinion polls show that although the general public wants less leniency in the courts, there is also continued endorsement for treatment and rehabilitation as the primary purposes of juvenile corrections.
- Worthy treatment and rehabilitation objectives must be balanced against the need to protect the public, to communicate an appropriate social sanction for wrongdoing, and to effect restitution both to victims and to society at large.
- The burgeoning population of incarcerated juvenile offenders will require substantial increased operational and capital funding from the state. As California reaches legislated spending limits, increasing juvenile justice costs may mean reducing state and local ability to pay for other social services.

Chapter 12
Income Support Programs
Jacquelyn McCroskey

- About two thirds of AFDC recipients are children; in 1986, an average of 1,098,000 California children per month relied on AFDC for the basics of life.
- Overall, AFDC recipients are younger, have less education and higher levels of poverty, are more likely to be nonwhite, and have younger children than do child support recipients.
- California's need standard for AFDC was more generous than that of any other state in 1970, but by 1987, 13 states had more generous need standards, thus providing access to a broader range of families.
- Though locally administered, income programs are authorized and primarily financed by the federal government. In large measure, federal decisions drive the programs and shape the context in which California's state and county governments can operate. California must continue to assure that counties have the flexibility to effectively meet widely ranging local needs.
- California's welfare reform program—Greater Avenues to Independence (GAIN)—was designed to offer a comprehensive range of services, including job search, basic adult education, English as a second language, career assessment, vocational education, on-the-job training, transitional employment, pre-employment preparation, child care, transportation, and other support services. However, the program is not yet fully implemented and budget restrictions may significantly limit the scope and effectiveness of the intended reform.
- GAIN provides a timely opportunity to rethink income support policies and to improve the conditions of families living in poverty. Establishing formal relations between county welfare departments and economic development agencies, colleges, occupational centers, child care providers, and other major service providers will be challenging, but may bring a fragmented system into closer alignment, an outcome with potential long-term benefits for California's families.
- Almost one million (942,248) California households received child support in 1984-85, and approximately half were also AFDC recipients. The average monthly child support payment per household in California for the first quarter of 1986 was $159.74, while the U.S. poverty guideline was $150 per month per child.
- State and national studies suggest the need for systemic changes in California's child support program, including

mechanisms for determining paternity, standard of need, and training of enforcement personnel. The child support program has not been conceptualized as a complement to the welfare program or adequately integrated into its administration.

- Although data collection systems are not yet at the point where individuals can be tracked across programs, it should be possible to develop better methods of aggregating data across programs serving children. In order to do so, policymakers must redefine the optimal administrative and conceptual relationships between systems to reflect the multiple needs of families and children rather than the convenience of departmental categories (for example, relationships between income support and the need for child abuse or juvenile justice services).
- Programs which provide basic food and shelter for children are manifestly beneficial both for children and for society, but there is too little research which examines how California's children are affected by its income support policies. The available data focus on systems and fiscal accountability issues rather than on the beneficial or deleterious child outcomes of current or potential income support strategies.
- A changing economy, along with recognition of the current welfare system's inadequacies, is rekindling debate on income support policies for children in California. Is it the purpose of income support programs to provide a minimum acceptable level below which no child shall be allowed to fall, or is it their purpose to ensure that parents achieve economic independence? Should parents retain the economic responsibilities of providing for their children regardless of ability to fulfil those responsibilities? What kinds of strings (for example, parental work obligations) should income support benefits carry?

Chapter 13
Policies for Children with Multiple Needs
Shirley Brice Heath and Milbrey Wallin McLaughlin

- This analysis is derived largely from the preceding chapters that demonstrate problems in service provision, conceptualization of needs, availability of data, and implementation of youth policies. The earlier chapters stress that such areas as poverty, juvenile incarceration, and child care are increasing, while children's services are overloaded, underfunded, static, and out-of-sync with dynamic societal changes.
- Children with multiple needs are underserved because of a lack of preventative services, failure to help children over time, failure to meet enough of a child's needs to assure a satisfactory outcome, and lack of coordination across service areas.
- The policy structure itself is beset by problems resulting from separate funding streams, inconsistent eligibility criteria, splintered organization of interest groups, and legislative jurisdictions that preserve service fragmentation.
- More money for the existing melange of programs will not provide the crucial improvement for children with multiple needs. Nor can any single entity, such as the school or family, deal effectively with interrelated youth problems.
- California's policies have not kept pace with the state's current and projected demographic picture of altered family life. Changing demographic characteristics have driven policymakers to respond to the needs of separate institutions that plead for segmented state action and funding.
- Few county departments have developed mission statements or department-wide master plans for children that identify the department's goals and objectives, integrate resource allocation and service delivery systems, assess the effectiveness of their efforts, or coordinate activities of divisions within departments.

- Few schools or services assist youths to deal with either the work world or the bureaucratic maze of public services. Adults in both schools and service agencies talk *at* youths, labelling their problems and fixing solutions dictated by administrative fiat or "that's just how it's done" procedures.
- In the short range, policy should focus on underservice and underfunding in such areas as child abuse, education, and health. In the long run, the goal should be to overhaul our current policy approach.
- Institutions tend to treat problems as acute rather than chronic, as episodic rather than continuing, and do not regard themselves as learning environments that help children help themselves.
- The data collected rarely inform reflective or dynamic responses by those within the agencies. Data focuses on financial "inputs" into programs, rather than outcomes. Information is administratively driven in the interest of service stabilization, and promotes reactive and prescriptive, rather than proactive and preventive, reforms.
- Service professionals within agencies seldom view their work as interactive and interdependent with the work of those in other agencies. Inadequate interprofessional preparation often begins at the university. Professionals such as teachers, nurses, and probation officers are prepared in segmented schools and programs that rarely stress the interrelatedness of children's problems.
- Promising local efforts to restructure and reconceptualize youth services have a number of common features. These features include outside flexible funding, top level commitment, implementation tailored to local contexts, middle-level administrative cooperation, and prior experience in trying to integrate services.
- Much of the duplication and confusion of fragmented children's service delivery can be prevented by providing related services at the same site such as schools. Where possible, services targeting a shared clientele should be located under one roof.

Chapter 14
State Policymaking for Children
Claire Smrekar

- A set of historical, political, organizational, and ideological forces has combined to shape a children's service delivery system in California described as fragmented, inefficient, and ill-conceived.
- Children's policy has evolved in response to a series of incremental and explosive periods in social welfare policy over the past several decades. In the 1960s, the Great Society gave birth to large categorical programs developed to target services for vulnerable children and their families. The Reagan Administration's New Federalism ushered in a period of consolidation and realignment as major categorical programs serving children were collapsed into block grants. Fundamental shifts in decision making, governance, and accountability accompanied these sweeping programmatic changes.
- A series of reports, hearings, and commissions has examined the condition of children's policy in California and recommended an array of organizational and regulatory remedies. Most recommendations involve relatively modest efforts to construct organizationally greater control, coordination, and efficiency in the delivery of children's services. Few of the recommendations involve a more sweeping, substantive exploration of the ways in which children's needs are perceived and defined.
- Despite the flurry of programmatic initiatives—including state legislative committees on children, children's budgets, children's codes, and commissions on children—most states continue to organize and deliver children's services through the traditional executive agency arrangement. At both state and local levels

of government, the bureaucratic structure persists in an array of eligibility requirements, procedures, standards, categories, assessment tools, and treatment protocols. In response, states (including California) and localities have adopted various approaches aimed at improving communication processes, coordination, and integration of services within these existing bureaucratic arrangements.

- A supportive and responsive children's policy must ultimately evolve out of a process which takes account of the complexities of childhood and the ambiguous relationship between family and state. By fostering the cooperation of the childserving professions across such fields as education, health, and social work, the process of crafting a children's policy for California can move toward this goal.

Working Paper
An Exploration of County Expenditures and Revenues for Children's Services
Paul Goren and Michael W. Kirst

Editor's Note: This working paper is not included in the PACE Report but is available through the Berkeley PACE office.

- State and federal lawmakers increasingly look to county governments to provide a growing array of mandated programs for children, and often require counties to share the cost of these services. As a result, counties are now the major governmental providers of an ever-expanding list of children's services, other than education.
- Though expected to bear a larger share of the burden, county governments are facing local and state constitutional revenue constraints that ill-equip them to respond to the growing need for children's services.
- At the county level, funding for children's services is composed of a volatile mix of revenues, with an overwhelming and precarious dependence on federal and state monies. Reduced federal support for social services, together with the dual mechanisms of Proposition 13 and the Gann limits on state spending, have required counties to do more for children with less resources.
- Counties are left unable to raise local revenue necessary to support non-mandated, discretionary programs such as children's protective services and child abuse prevention. Some localities are unable even to participate in federal or state matching programs for children, simply for the lack of local matching funds.
- The intensifying competition for scarce resources exerts a fiscal "squeeze" on children, as counties ration their children's services to stay within budget limits. County officials report cutting children's services in order to fund adult correction and other state- and federally mandated services for adults.
- By forcing children's programs to focus on acute care rather than on prevention, present policies create a potentially negative cycle of long-range implications for the condition of children.
- Few California counties collect data on their total expenditures on children. More coherent children's policy requires better data systems and analysis at the county level.

Working Paper
Child Care Quality from the Child's Perspective: A Hypothetical Account and Research Review
Lyda Beardsley

Editor's Note: This working paper is not included in the PACE Report but is available through the Berkeley PACE office.

- This monograph, written as a narrative, considers the growing body of research on child care quality from the *child's* perspective.

- Over the past decade, early childhood educators and researchers have begun to identify a number of characteristics they believe are essential to the provision of quality out-of-home care for young children.
- Indicators of quality of care cited include adult/child ratio, group size, caregiver training, quality of adult-child social or verbal behavior, and effects on specific outcomes (i.e., on language or social development) for children in care.
- Yet no previous study has described the *cumulative* effects of specific quality indicators on the overall character of a child's experiences in child care.
- This report takes a fresh look at current quality issues in child care from the perspective of the child by introducing a group of fictional preschool age children and following them through a hypothetical day in each of two quite different child care settings. Though fictional, these accounts are based on a sampling of real events in both good and poor quality child care facilities.

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