

Executive Summary

Purpose of the Study

The Even Start Family Literacy Program addresses the basic educational needs of parents and children from birth through age seven from low-income families. The program provides unified, multi-component services consisting of (1) interactive literacy activities between parents and their children; (2) training for parents to be the primary teachers for their children and full partners in their children's education; (3) parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency; and (4) an age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life.

Even Start, which began as a federally administered program in 1989-90, became a state-administered program in 1992 when the national funding exceeded \$50 million. Since that time, the responsibilities of state Even Start offices have evolved substantially. Initially, each state had relatively few local projects to administer, the state grants were much smaller, and the statutory requirements were fewer and less rigorously defined. However, since the mid-1990s, the federal priority began to shift from a focus on implementation of quality services to the need to demonstrate program accountability and effectiveness based on educational outcomes of program participants. As the number of local projects grew steadily, now numbering more than 1,000 nationwide, the programmatic guidance and leadership provided by Even Start state coordinators to local projects have become increasingly critical in promoting effective programs at the local level.

Since the inception of the Even Start program in 1989, the U.S. Department of Education has conducted three cycles of national Even Start evaluations and collected considerable information about Even Start's implementation, participants, and impact at the local project level. However, there has been no systematic study of the administrative activities that take place at the state level. Because the states play a key role in Even Start as a link between the budgets, policies, and continuous program improvement efforts adopted by the federal government and the delivery of services by local projects, the lack of systematic information about how states administer Even Start is a major gap in efforts to further refine the program.

This Study of State Administration of the Even Start Family Literacy Program was designed to systematically describe all major areas of Even Start administration at the state level and factors that facilitate or impede program improvement activities conducted by Even Start state coordinators. This information is intended to: 1) assist the federal Even Start staff to better target their guidance and technical assistance to states, and 2) provide state coordinators with descriptions of program administration practices in other states as a self-assessment guide.

Study Design

This study involved two components: (1) a survey of all state Even Start offices (state survey) and (2) case studies based on interviews with selected state coordinators through telephone calls or site visits. The state survey was sent to Even Start state coordinators in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Completed survey forms were received from 51 state coordinators. The survey, conducted from November 2001 to February 2002, collected information regarding:

- State Even Start administrative infrastructure.
- Process of recruiting and selecting subgrantees.
- Process of providing technical assistance to subgrantees.
- Process of monitoring subgrantee performance.
- Development and implementation of performance indicators.
- Program evaluation and improvement activities.
- Areas targeted by states for improvement at state and local levels.
- Even Start program administrative challenges and accomplishments.

Twelve states were selected for the case study, designed to collect in-depth information on states' administrative practices. They included: large, medium, and small states; states that received Statewide Family Literacy Initiative (SFLI) grants and those that did not; states in which Even Start is located under adult education and states where the affiliation is with early childhood or K-12 programs; and states in different geographic areas. Under SFLI, discretionary federal grants were awarded to 38 states to support building state-level partnerships that would strengthen family literacy services in the state. The case study interviews were conducted between March and May of 2002, through telephone interviews with six states and site visits to another six states.

When the state survey and the case study interviews were conducted, states were in the process of adjusting to two major changes: 1) the implementation of states' performance indicator systems, and 2) a substantial increase in the Even Start budget (from \$150 million in 2000-01 to \$250 million in 2001-02). Information presented in this report describes state Even Start operation in the early stages of adjustment to these changes, and may not reflect the current status of related operations (e.g., implementation of performance indicator systems).

Key Study Findings

State Even Start Administrative Infrastructure

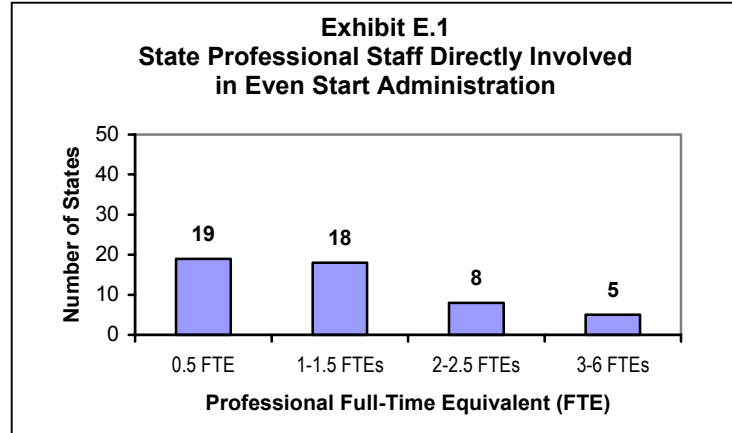
The location of Even Start within the state government and the stability of the Even Start state coordinator are factors that affect how the program is administered at the state level. The state Even Start administrative infrastructure is largely determined by state officials and offices above the Even Start state coordinator. Before 2001, federal Even Start grants were awarded to state offices—usually state education agencies (SEAs). The No Child Left Behind Act amended the law in 2001 to require Even Start grants to be awarded only to SEAs. Once the grant is received by a state, it is up to the state to assign the administration of Even Start to a specific program, division, or unit.

Even Start is located under adult education (or programs related to education of adults such as vocational education and community colleges) in 13 states; under early childhood education (ECE) or K-12 programs in 24 states, and 14 states operate Even Start under programs other than adult education, ECE, or K-12 programs. States may move Even Start from one unit to another. Twenty-four states have moved Even Start since 1992, generally only once. However, eight state Even Start offices reported having experienced two or more moves since 1992.

Even Start staffing in some states has been very stable, while some states have experienced frequent changes in state coordinators. More than half of the states have had only one or two state coordinators since 1992, and a quarter of the current coordinators are very experienced with nine or more years of Even Start experience. However, 17 states have had three or four state coordinators since 1992, and about a quarter of the current state coordinators have had one year experience or less in this position. Frequent turnover may interfere with the accumulation of program and administrative knowledge as well as progress in program improvement efforts.

The state survey data corroborate informal accounts by state coordinators indicating that staff resources for Even Start at the state level are very limited. In 19 states, Even Start is administered with .5 professional full-time-equivalent (FTE) and no more than 1.5 clerical FTEs (Exhibit E.1).

The states that have a larger than average staff tend to be states with more than the average number of local projects. States were divided into three categories: 1) “small” states which had nine or fewer projects, 2) “medium” states which had between 10 and 24 projects, and 3) “large” states with 25 or more projects. The average total number of FTEs (including professional and clerical staff) was three FTEs for large states, while medium states had 1.7 FTEs, and small states had 1.6 FTEs. Furthermore, most state coordinators have multiple responsibilities other than administering Even Start; they spend, on average, 49 percent of their time on Even Start duties, and the remaining time on other responsibilities.



Note: FTEs were computed using 50 percent time for all part-time personnel. The percentages are based on 50 states that provided data regarding staffing.

Exhibit reads: Nineteen states reported that professional staff working directly with Even Start administration represented .5 full-time equivalent (FTE).

Despite the limited Even Start staff resources and responsibilities for multiple programs, Even Start state coordinators generally have a high degree of autonomy in making administrative decisions regarding grantee selection process and criteria, funding decisions, and subgrantee monitoring practices.

Interagency Coordination and Collaboration at the State Level

To augment the limited staff resources, state coordinators obtain assistance from collaborative partnerships with other state-level programs. The most common state-level collaborators for Even Start are adult education programs (37 states, Exhibit E.2).

Exhibit E.2 Major Collaborators of the Even Start Program at the State Level		
	No. of States	% of States
Adult education programs, agencies (e.g., GED program)	37	73%
Head Start	32	63%
Title I	30	59%
Early childhood education programs (e.g., Early Childhood Block Grant Development, Division of Early Childhood and Childcare)	19	37%
Other state education offices/programs (e.g., Office of Field Services, Division of Curriculum and Instruction)	16	31%
Literacy programs (e.g., family literacy consortium)	15	29%
State departments other than education (e.g., Departments of Health, Labor, Public Welfare)	14	27%
Family service programs (e.g., Family Resource Center, Council of Children and Families)	6	12%
Universities	6	12%
Workforce development/employment offices (e.g., One Stop Employment Centers, state workforce commission)	5	10%
Other (e.g., radio/television stations)	7	14%
Public libraries	2	4%

Note: The percentages are based on 51 states. Each state could indicate up to five major collaborators.
Exhibit reads: Thirty-seven states (73 percent) reported adult education programs as major collaborators.

Because Even Start requires providing both adult education and early childhood services, it is no surprise that nearly three out of four states cited adult education as a major collaborator. In about 50 percent of the states Even Start is located in early childhood education or K-12 program areas. Among these states, 75 percent reported adult education as a major collaborator, while 62 percent of states where Even Start is with adult education reported adult-education related collaborators. The second and third most common collaborators are Head Start (32 states) and Title I (30 states).

Collaborators make multiple types of contributions to Even Start, e.g., sharing various types of resources, conducting joint staff development activities, holding joint workshops or conferences, and sharing program administrative functions. However, state coordinators face challenges in forming strong collaborative relationships, such as: turf issues among related programs; different program philosophies, definitions, and accountability requirements; lack of understanding about the family literacy approach and a perception that Even Start is an extremely complex and demanding program among potential collaborators; and preexisting negative relationships between potential collaborating agencies.

Subgrantee Recruitment and Selection

One of the major responsibilities of state coordinators is to perform a series of tasks that culminate in the annual awarding of new and continuing grants, including the preparation of a Request for Application (RFA), release of the RFA, provision of technical assistance and Even Start information to applicants, convening and training application reviewers, review of applications, making selection and funding level decisions, and notifying grant recipients.

States are involved in various phases of the grant selection process throughout the year, and the annual schedules vary considerably among states. A majority of the states (32) prepare their RFAs in the November to February period.¹ About half of the states (24) release RFAs in January or March; provision of technical assistance to grant applicants tends to coincide with the release of RFAs. The application due dates vary from as early as February to as late as August. However, in a majority of the states (35), applications are due in April, May, or June. Thirty-one states reported that they begin reviewing the applications in May or June and make selection decisions in June, July, or August. Many of these steps occur concurrently in any given state.

The Even Start statute specifies that states give priority to applications that target areas of the state with high numbers of the most-in-need families or that will be located in empowerment zones or enterprise communities. **Thirty-eight states described factors that receive priority points including: high rates of poverty, unemployment, homelessness, TANF receipt, free-lunch; Empowerment Zone-Enterprise Community; Title I school, priority school district;**

¹ These counts are based on 46 states that provided data for these questions.

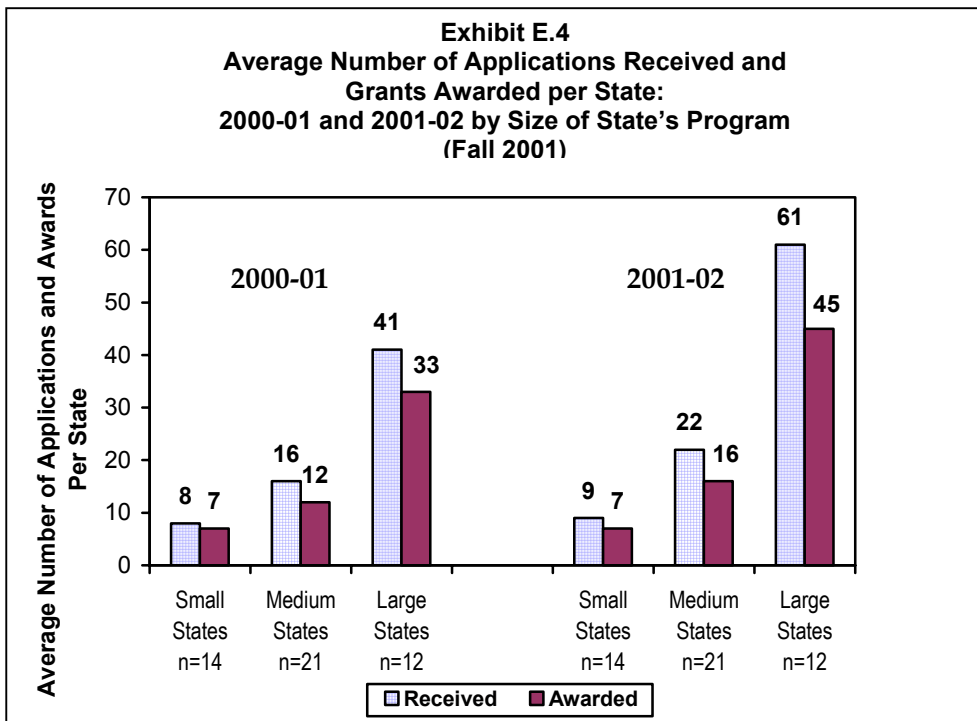
high rate of illiteracy, low English proficiency; high rate of social and family problems (e.g., domestic violence, teen pregnancy); and absence of other family literacy services in the area.

All of the 50 states that provided data reported that they provide technical assistance to applicants for preparing their grant applications, using methods such as: providing written materials about Even Start and subgrantee responsibilities (43 states), conducting a phone conference with potential applicants (43 states), conducting a technical assistance conference (36 states), and presenting Even Start program requirements at state conferences of other programs such as Title I (36 states).

In 2001-02, when the federal Even Start budget increased by \$100 million, there was a 50 percent increase in the number of new applications states received, and states awarded subgrants to about half of the new applicants (Exhibit E.3).

Exhibit E.3					
Number of Subgrant Applications and Awards (2000-01 and 2001-02)^a					
Type of Application 2000-01	Number of States Reporting^b	Number of Applications Received		Number of Subgrants Awarded	
		Total^c	Average^c	Total^c	Average^c
New	35	271	8	108	3
Continuation	40	473	12	471	12
Re-Competition	22	71	3	63	3
Total: 2000-01	43	815	19	642	15
2001-02^a					
New	46	595	13	289	6
Continuation	45	561	13	560	12
Re-Competition	34	150	4	130	4
Total: 2001-02	47	1,306	28	979	21
<p>^a The 2001-02 numbers reflect activities as of the time of the state survey. Some states planned to award additional subgrants for 2001-02 in the spring of 2002.</p> <p>^b Numbers in this column indicate the states that provided the counts of applications and awards in each application category. Different numbers of states reported data on each type of application category because not all states receive re-competition or new applications every year.</p> <p>^c The average numbers of applications and awards are based on the number of states that reported data for each application category.</p> <p><i>Exhibit reads: Based on data received from 35 states, 271 new grant applications were submitted in 2000-01, averaging eight applications per state. Of these, 108 applications received Even Start funding (on average, three per state).</i></p>					

The number of applications increased in 2001-02, especially in medium and large states. All states, regardless of size, awarded fewer grants than the number of applications received. However, the number of applications processed varied greatly between large and small states (Exhibit E.4). Given that the majority of the states have only one to two FTEs for Even Start, providing a thorough review and processing of grant applications (including technical assistance to applicants) could amount to a major, resource-intensive task in the larger states.



Note: The numbers include new, continuation, and re-competition applications and grants.
Exhibit reads: In 2000-01, small states with four to nine projects received an average of eight grant applications and awarded an average of seven grants. On average, large states (with 25 or more projects) received 41 applications and awarded 33 grants.

Twenty states reported that they had denied continuation funding to at least one project since the beginning of Even Start because of insufficient progress. The primary reasons for denying funding were insufficient program management and implementation progress (17 states), low recruitment and enrollment rates (14 states), and low quality and intensity of educational services (11 states). Only a few states denied continuation funding on the basis of participant outcome data. As part of the performance indicator requirement, all states must now use outcome data as the basis of continuation funding decisions, which will be a new challenge for many states and projects.

Provision of Programmatic Guidance and Technical Assistance

In the early years of Even Start, as the awarding agency, the federal Even Start office and its technical assistance contractors were the main providers of guidance to local projects on basic program design and approach. As the number of projects increased and the program became administered by the states, state coordinators began to assume greater responsibility for providing technical assistance to local projects. Now, this is one of the key leadership and management functions of the state Even Start office.

Almost all states provide technical assistance to applicants in the preparation of grant applications and provide technical assistance meetings or training sessions for local projects once they are funded. More than half of the states (28) have produced and disseminated printed materials for technical assistance that contain guidance and instructions on Even Start program implementation and service delivery.

States also conduct technical assistance meetings and workshops. Frequent topics include: information regarding grant applications, new grantee orientation, performance indicators, assessment tools and standards, state and local evaluations, data collection and use, software, Web, and database use, and program administration in general. The technical assistance workshops and meetings are conducted by a wide range of practitioners and professionals, including: local and state Even Start staff (36 states); staff from state and local non-Even Start agencies such as collaborators (32 states); and contracted technical assistance consultants (37 states).

Some states use formal means to identify local projects' technical assistance needs such as a needs assessment survey, focus groups of local project staff, or a systematic review of local evaluation reports. Other states use less formal ways to identify needs, such as personal communications with local project staff through listservs, e-mail, and telephone calls, or through meetings and on-site visits.

Subgrantee Performance Monitoring

Provision of technical assistance and monitoring of local projects' program implementation and participant outcomes are ongoing responsibilities of state coordinators. **On-site visits, the most commonly used method of monitoring local projects' program operations (46 states), are generally conducted by the state coordinator or other state Even Start staff.** However, staff from other state agencies or programs and external consultants also conduct site visits to local projects. Of the 46 states that conduct on-site visits to monitor local projects, six states reported that local project directors (e.g., veteran directors, regional coordinators, mentoring teams) are involved in these visits. Most of the states conduct on-site visits to each project once a year or less often, while 10 states schedule several visits per year to each project.

During on-site visits, a majority of the states focus on compliance and a project's progress in implementing family literacy services (Exhibit E.5). Thirty states indicated that they monitor the quality and intensity of instructional services during site visits. The next most common issues addressed during site visits are the adequacy of the program facilities, staff morale, and staff qualifications. Only eight state coordinators indicated that they examine anything concerning participants (e.g., eligibility, retention rates, academic achievement, and participation records) during the monitoring site visits, and a few states reported that they monitor how well the local projects deal with data collection, reporting, evaluation activities, and fiscal management.

Exhibit E.5				
Number of States Addressing Various Monitoring Topics, by Types of Monitoring Methods and Activities				
	Any Method	On-Site Visits	Phone/E-mail/ Video Conference	Reports
	(n=51 states)	(n=46 states)	(n=15 states)	(n=15 states)
Compliance with Even Start law	34 states	34 states	7 states	7 states
Quality/intensity of instructional services	34	30	5	8
Program implementation	33	33	6	10
Program facilities	23	21	3	4
Staff: morale, roles, qualification	20	18	5	6
Areas in need of technical assistance	14	9	6	2
Data collection, evaluation	13	6	5	3
Participant information: eligibility, retention, academic achievement	11	8	3	4
Fiscal/budget information	9	4	0	5
Performance indicators	5	2	6	0

Note: Data are based on responses to an open-ended question. Each state could be coded with one or more responses regarding topics and issues monitored and the method of monitoring. The numbers listed under "any method" represent the number of states that monitor each topic by at least one method.

Exhibit reads: Thirty-four states use on-site visits to monitor local projects' compliance with the law.

State coordinators indicated that data collection from local projects was an area targeted for future improvement efforts. Forty-three states indicated that they have a data collection and reporting system for local projects to report program data to states. These systems vary widely, and include paper forms, computerized systems, or some combination of these methods.

Of the 43 states that had a data reporting system, about 80 percent indicated that they regularly collected data from local projects on: recruitment and enrollment rates, hours of service offered, participant demographics, hours of participation for adults and children, retention rates, and indicators of educational progress and goal achievement for adults and children. Less commonly collected were data on the content and approach of instructional services offered in each core service area.

Development and Implementation of Performance Indicators

The Even Start legislation requires all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia to develop and implement the states' Even Start performance indicators to be used as a framework for the states' continuous program improvement efforts. Each state's initial set of performance indicators was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education by states in June 2001.²

² The minimum requirements for this submission were descriptions of the six legislatively required indicators to be implemented in each state.

States differed greatly in every aspect of Even Start performance indicators that were submitted in June 2001, including the measures used, performance standards set, and subgroups to whom the measurements and standards were to be applied. A review of the June 2001 performance indicator documents by Abt Associates Inc. identified four areas that called for further development to enable successful implementation of the system.

- Further development and clarification of the content and specification of performance indicators (e.g., participant subgroup definitions, assessment measures, and performance standards).
- Specific guidance for the implementation process such as: how and where to obtain data collection instruments; data collection, data entry and storage, data reporting processes; and data collection and reporting schedules.
- Strategies for staff training to ensure that staff are properly trained to conduct (1) the data collection, especially the administration of standardized assessment instruments; (2) computation of outcome measures; and (3) reporting of each indicator correctly.
- Guidelines for the use of indicator data to avoid gaps in data collection and unnecessary demands on local and state staff time, and targeted professional development to facilitate integration of participant outcome with continuous program improvement and curriculum development.

Most states planned to collect the first round of performance indicator data in 2002. Fourteen states had already begun to collect data in 2001 or earlier. About half of the states plan to collect performance indicator data annually; 15 states, twice a year.

Program Evaluation and Improvement

In the early years of Even Start, the development and implementation of the family literacy program was the highest priority. However, since the mid-1990s, the policy focus for Even Start has gradually shifted from program implementation to data-based program improvement and the need to demonstrate Even Start's program impact on participants' educational achievements. In this process, state-level evaluation activities have increased, as has the attention paid by states to the use of evaluation data for the purpose of program management and improvement.

Half of the states reported that they conduct a state-level Even Start evaluation, although the definitions of "state evaluation" may vary among states. More than half of the 24 states that conduct a state evaluation indicated that they used data collected by local projects for the national evaluation as part of the state evaluation.

States also assist the local projects with local evaluations by providing technical guidance and training. Twenty-eight states require local projects to collect specific types of data in

their local evaluation; most of these states require projects to collect data on families' progress toward educational and economic goals, family demographic data, and hours of participation by enrolled adults and children. About one-third of the states provide training for local Even Start evaluators; 15 states directly coordinate the local evaluation activities for all subgrantees.

Although 42 states said that they collect and review local evaluation reports, 31 states indicated that they use local evaluation data or reports for continuous program improvement, and 17 states said they do not. The latter group of states may collect the reports mainly as a way of ensuring that local projects are complying with their evaluation requirement. For the 31 states that use the local evaluations, the results are used for a number of purposes, including:

- Developing guidelines for the following year's program improvement efforts and identifying topics for further technical assistance to local projects (16 states).
- Providing project-specific feedback to local projects and examining program outcomes among all projects in a state (12 states).
- Providing a needs assessment for statewide professional development activities (six states).
- Preparing state-required reports (four states).
- Receiving input in making continuation funding decisions (three states).
- Training local projects on data-based decision-making (two states).

Relationships between Infrastructure Characteristics and Leadership and Management Practices

The state survey data provided an opportunity to examine possible relationships between state Even Start administrative infrastructure, on one hand, and some of the leadership and management practices that states use to administer Even Start, on the other.

States that had one or more of the following conditions provided more technical assistance on performance indicators to local projects: 1) had a relatively high number of local projects, 2) had a higher number of professional staff, 3) had a state coordinator who spent relatively more time on Even Start tasks, and 4) received a SFLI grant. These results suggest that it may be necessary for larger states to provide more technical assistance to ensure that all of their projects are on board with this new requirement. In addition, more time devoted by state coordinators and other professional staff to Even Start tasks may facilitate the implementation of performance indicators.

States that received a SFLI grant provided more technical assistance to grant applicants. States that made greater use of advisory and consultant input also reported more assistance to grant applicants relative to other states. The availability of additional resources from SFLI

funds and additional expertise provided by collaborators, advisors, and consultants may enable states to provide more technical assistance to applicants and thereby raising the quality of applications.

Areas Targeted by States for Improvement at State and Local Levels

In recent years, in response to the legislative emphasis on demonstrating Even Start's effectiveness as measured by participant educational outcomes, many states have implemented strategies to strengthen state-level program operations which in turn would facilitate local projects' achieving their program improvement goals. In these efforts, state coordinators identified the following areas they plan to target for program improvement.

- **Strengthen staff resources at the state level and improve staff qualifications at the local level (18 states).**
- **Implement additional strategies to increase the effectiveness of local project activities, including improvement in technical assistance and monitoring of local projects, use of local project peer review teams, and emphasizing the importance of continuous program improvement and data-based decision making to local projects (16 states).** Many states are in the process of implementing an electronic data collection system and data reporting procedures in conjunction with the full implementation of the performance indicator system.
- **Increase involvement of state Even Start staff in evaluation activities, by coordinating state and local evaluations, coordinating technical assistance and evaluation activities, and monitoring the quality and training of local evaluators (13 states).**
- **Improve interagency collaboration and integrate family literacy in a wider array of educational programs at the state level (13 states).**

Accomplishments and Challenges in State Even Start Administration

By far the accomplishment most commonly reported by state coordinators for 2000-01 was the development and implementation of states' Even Start performance indicator systems (34 states).

The major challenge most often reported was limited time to perform the multiple tasks required of coordinators, such as making site visits to closely monitor projects, juggling Even Start work and other responsibilities, balancing state-level work and working directly with local projects, and accommodating to a rapid increase in the number of local projects. Other major challenges echo the same areas that are targeted as priorities for program improvement: limited state staff resources, limited time and expertise to guide and help local projects to address project-specific challenges, and promoting quality evaluation and implementation of the performance indicator system.

Useful Strategies and Feedback from State Coordinator Interviews

While limited staff resources and time to devote to Even Start responsibilities appear to be ubiquitous, some state coordinators described approaches and practices that mitigate their negative impact. **Effective use of experienced local project coordinators in functions officially slated for state coordinators can help to augment the state staff resources and technical expertise.** Some states have established formal procedures to assign veteran project coordinators as regional coordinators or peer mentors.

Many state coordinators employ the services of external consultants (e.g., technical assistance contractors, university-based content specialists) to increase the administrative and technical capacity of state Even Start administrative functions. Further, in order for the consultants' input to be useful, state coordinators need to exercise strong oversight and control in working with the consultants or work within a collaborative team structure with consultants. The products of consultants' activities must be incorporated into state policy decisions and leadership, which can come only from the state coordinator and state officials above the state coordinator.

The experienced state coordinators interviewed stressed the importance of the following strategies for improving the quality of local project services:

- Ensuring that all Even Start grant applicants and new grantees know clearly all federal and state requirements for Even Start projects as well as the consequences of a failure to meet the requirements.
- Active involvement by local projects in the design and development of the performance indicator system. When local projects take ownership of the performance indicator system as *their* tool to help them operate a high-quality Even Start project, the intended goal of the indicator system is more likely to be realized.
- Establishing clearly stated, systematic procedures to correct poorly performing projects. This will become increasingly important in the wake of uniform implementation of performance standards.

Need for Continued Federal Input and Assistance

Most state coordinators interviewed who had received the SFLI grant felt that the effective period of the SFLI grant was too short to allow strong partnerships to develop. They also reported that interagency collaboration played a critical role in their ability to administer Even Start and, without continued support similar to the SFLI grant, the role played by interagency collaboration might be weakened.

State coordinators, both new and experienced, rely heavily on guidance and communication from the federal Even Start program office to learn about legislative changes and how these

changes affect state and local responsibilities. State coordinators expressed their appreciation for programmatic guidance they receive from the federal Even Start office, particularly the quick responses they get through the Even Start state coordinator listserv on questions concerning statutory requirements, the personal attention they receive when they telephone the federal program office, and the special meetings of state coordinators at the national Even Start conferences.

During the first 10 years of state-administered Even Start, the role of the state coordinators has evolved along with considerable expansion and changes in the program. This study found a wide variation in states' administrative practices, as well as creative strategies that some states have devised to bolster their capacity to lead the states' program improvement efforts. As the Even Start program continues to evolve, another major change on the horizon may be in the collaborative partnership between federal and state Even Start staff.

Based on statements made by state coordinators and the areas of administrative challenges identified in this study, the following types of federal support for the states, in addition to assistance already being provided, would further strengthen the complementary leadership roles played by the federal and state Even Start programs:

- **Sponsoring a comprehensive clearinghouse of information and materials related to topics such as:** Even Start legislative and program guidance; family literacy curricula; research-based instructional approaches for early childhood education, adult education, and parenting education; child and adult assessments; family literacy staff development; and local evaluation approaches.
- **Providing more opportunities for state and local Even Start staff, including their evaluators and technical consultants, to attend high-quality, educational and technical assistance workshops led by national experts.**
- **Providing more opportunities for state coordinators to work together in which state coordinators would take the lead in setting the agenda, presenting effective practices or lessons learned, and conducting collaborative problem solving sessions.**
- **Providing federal leadership to promote collection of common program and participant data that are comparable across states.** Such data would not only serve the federal need for national Even Start data, but also provide the states with a national benchmark to assess their progress. Federal leadership could play a critical role in developing a process by which key outcome data being collected through the states' performance indicator systems are compiled to monitor the overall program improvement nationwide.