



Policy and Procedure Manual

Prepared for Agencies Participating in the
Los Angeles Centralized Eligibility List

*LACEL is a Project of the Los Angeles County Child Care Planning Committee
Managed by the Office of Child Care and funded through the
California Department of Education/Child Development Division*

LOS ANGELES CENTRALIZED ELIGIBILITY LIST



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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of This Document

This document is intended for use by agencies participating in the Los Angeles Centralized Eligibility List (LACEL). Its function is to assist these organizations in using the LACEL System to register and search for eligible families. Technical instructions for use of the LACEL application/database are provided in the User Manual or through training materials available through the Office of Child Care.

1.1.1 Policies and Procedures

Guidelines and requirements for participation in the LACEL are documented in these Policies and Procedures. Changes to any policy or procedures will conform to California Department of Education (CDE) guidelines and be developed, discussed, and adopted by an Advisory Forum made up of representatives from the agencies using LACEL and then communicated to participating agencies, and parents as appropriate.

1.2 LACEL System Statement of Purpose

1.2.1 The purposes of the LACEL are:

- To simplify the eligibility list registration process for families and increase access to all child development programs for which they are eligible.
- To reduce the need for families to register at multiple agencies, multiple times.
- To increase the pool of available, eligible children from which child development agencies can draw to fill program vacancies.
- To increase the accuracy of data available to agencies for enrollment purposes.
- To provide accurate, timely data on local child care needs for use by policymakers and agencies.

1.2.2 A Shared Enterprise

The LACEL is not “owned” by any one entity, including the LACEL Administrator. It is a shared enterprise for the benefit of families and CDE contractors. The LACEL is of most value to families and agencies when the information it contains is accurate and up-to-date. Maintaining this information is the responsibility of all parties: LACEL Administrator, agency users, and families.

1.3 Definition of an Eligibility List

An “eligibility list” differs from a “waiting list” in that a family does not have a set “place in line”. Children are selected for an open subsidized child development space based on eligibility requirements and other priorities, such as family income and Child Protective Services (CPS) status. These priorities are determined by the CDE. A family’s rank may change because of their changing circumstances or the circumstances of other families on the list. While time on the list is one factor, it is not the only one, nor is it the most important.

Different subsidy programs may have different eligibility criteria. The LACEL is able to calculate a family's eligibility and ranking for various CDE-funded programs and for Head Start based on information supplied by the family and input to the LACEL.

1.4 History of the LACEL Development

In 1997, as part of the State of California's welfare reform plan, the California Legislature recommended that each county design a centralized eligibility list (CEL) for families seeking subsidized child care. In 2002, legislation passed that clarified the role of Local Planning Councils and specifically stated that each Local Planning Council should develop a CEL for its County. In Los Angeles County, the Child Care Planning Committee (Planning Committee) established a CEL Work Group comprised of representatives of CDE-funded agencies to plan for a countywide CEL and to implement a pilot to test a CEL system.

The Work Group was instrumental in selecting the vendor through a formal RFP (Request for Proposal) process who developed the CEL application for the County of Los Angeles. The vendor, Controltec, has customized its KinderWait product to meet the specifications requested by the County of Los Angeles on behalf of the pilot agencies.

As a recipient of pilot project funds, Los Angeles County is obliged to provide data from the LACEL to the CDE and participate in evaluation interviews and surveys.

1.5 LACEL Database

The LACEL database is housed in servers maintained by the County of Los Angeles. The database is maintained and updated by the LACEL Administrator. Currently, the staff of the Office of Child Care within the Service Integration Branch of the Chief Executive Office serves as the LACEL Administrator. The LACEL Administrator is responsible for daily tasks associated with running the database. Participating agencies access the LACEL via a secure Web site using their own Internet connections. Each participating user has a unique ID and password that allows them to do the following:

- Enter family information
- Update family information as necessary
- Find eligible families to fill available subsidized openings
- Change the status of children to indicate enrollment
- Print reports, notices, and mailing labels and contact lists

1.5.1 Security

All data transmission is protected. Users log on to a secure Web site using a unique ID and password. Only the LACEL Administrator has access to some reporting features and user profiles. The site is also built so that all data being transferred between the LACEL database and the participating Agencies is encrypted with 128-bit encryption.

2 Agency Responsibilities

To use the LACEL system, agencies must meet the requirements outlined in this section.

2.1 Agency Registration

All participating agencies are required to fill out the Agency Profile to register on the LACEL. This must happen before any user has access. Each agency registered in the LACEL has its own unique identifying number assigned by CDE. The agency's ID number is used by the system to report activity conducted in the LACEL including enrollments, which are reported to the CDE each quarter. The Database Specialist enters the agency ID number along with contact information and the contract types administered by the agency.

2.1.1 Updates to Agency Information

Once registered, it is important that the agency representative notify the LACEL Database Specialist of any changes such as: address; telephone or e-mails; programs/funding; and addition, removal, or new assignments of Agency Leads.

2.2 Staff Requirements

2.2.1 Agency Lead

Agencies are required to designate at least one member of their staff to assume the Agency Lead responsibilities. The Agency Lead is the primary contact for the LACEL Administrator. Requests for technical assistance and inquiries should be made by the Agency Lead (or designated back up). The Agency Lead is in charge of the daily operation of the LACEL at the agency level. Agencies may designate one or more people to be a back up to the Agency Lead, but are not required to do so. However, agencies are strongly advised to designate a back up Agency Lead to help ensure continuity when the Agency Lead is unavailable or leaves the organization. In some cases, where the agency has many sites, it may designate several "Leads", each with his/her own program type or region.

2.2.1.1 Agency Leads Responsibilities

The following activities are required for agency leads:

- Register new users and lock out users who no longer need access
- Request training for new users
- Participate in the LACEL Forums, User Support Groups, Surveys, etc.
- Ensure that sufficient numbers of staff at the agency are trained to use the LACEL
- Respond to requests from the LACEL Database Specialist within a reasonable time. Requests may include inquiries about: Agency's data input, requests for information pertinent to the system, and requests to participate in surveys or other evaluation activities.
- Provide basic technical assistance to his/her own staff (passwords resets, unlocking accounts, changing statuses of families, etc)
- Provide his/her e-mail and contact information as well as other Users' contact information when requested by the LACEL Database Specialist

- Report unauthorized access/use of the LACEL
- Inform the LACEL Database Specialist of:
 - Staff changes; provide the signed confidentiality forms for new users
 - Program changes (new contracts, sites, etc.)
 - Agency contact information changes
 - Closure of their account when leaving the organization or leaving their role as the Agency Lead

The following are recommended activities for agency leads:

- Run the Productivity Report at least once per quarter (monthly reports are recommended)
- Request and attend LACEL trainings on how to manage authorized Users

2.2.2 Agency Users

All staff who use the LACEL system for implementation of the Agency's CDE contract or other appropriate child development program services are "users". Each user must receive basic training provided by the LACEL Database Specialist on the LACEL application before they begin to work with the LACEL. Training for new users may be requested through the Agency Lead. Each user should be comfortable using a computer with a Web browser, logging in and out of the LACEL system, and entering and searching for information. Each user must be familiar with the policies related to entering family data, conducting searches, and updating records, as well as the confidentiality requirements.

2.2.3 LACEL Advisory Forum

Each participating Agency is invited to have a representative at the LACEL Advisory Forum. The Advisory Forum will consider policy issues related to the LACEL. Members are responsible for raising issues that require attention and providing feedback on suggested changes to the LACEL system. The Forum also recommends changes to the LACEL policies and procedures. It is recommended that at least one representative per agency attend at least one forum per year.

2.2.4 Confidentiality

All users of the LACEL system must maintain the confidentiality of families whose information is in the system. Users will be required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement before given access to the LACEL system. Completed and signed confidentiality forms may be mailed (preferred) or faxed to the Office of Child Care. Agencies must take the steps necessary to ensure unauthorized people do not have access to the LACEL system. Such measures include enforcing the use of individual passwords, locking out staff who no longer need to use the LACEL, taking steps to ensure the LACEL database is not open when staff leave their workstations, and training staff so that they do not inadvertently give out personal family information during conversations with families or the public.

Personal family information about a client should never be given out over the telephone even to those who appear to be an appropriate family member. Staff should be trained to ask the person who is identifying themselves as a parent for information rather than asking for verification of information that staff provides. **Example:** "Can you state your current address?" or "What is the name of your four year old?" **Not:** "Do you live at 6675 Elm Street?"

Personal family information about a client should never be given out over the telephone, even to those who appear to be the appropriate parent/guardian.

Orientation for new LACEL users should include a warning not to pull data and share it with anyone other than staff who need the information to perform their job duties. **No work should be done using the LACEL from a home location.** Finally, no one should share his/her LACEL name and password with anyone. Each authorized user has his/her own name and password.

2.3 Hardware, Software and Services

2.3.1 Requirements

Agencies are responsible for providing the following:

- Computers; agencies may decide how many computers are required to adequately access the LACEL system
- Printers, accessible from the LACEL computers
- Web browser supporting 128 bit encryption
- A connection to the Internet; a broadband (DSL/Cable/ISDN/T1 etc.) connection is recommended. Agencies are also responsible for troubleshooting any connection problems.
- An email account for the Agency Lead(s)
- Maintenance and upgrades as necessary

2.3.2 Agencies without Internet

The LACEL Administrator will work with any agency that does not currently have Internet connections to ensure that they have access to the information on families for enrollment.

3 LACEL Administrator

3.1 Responsibilities

3.1.1 The LACEL Administrator

The LACEL Administrator consists of both program and technical staff within the Office of Child Care who carry out all functions of the role of the LACEL Administrator. The Office of Child Care is housed at the Service Integration Branch of the Chief Executive Office of the County of Los Angeles.

3.1.2 Management Functions

Tasks included in the daily management of LACEL are:

- Establishing data management policies for the LACEL staff and for participating agencies.
- Producing and sending update forms to registered families in order to maintain accurate information in the LACEL.
- Generating on-demand reports for non-CEL users.
- Reviewing activity logs.

- Registering new user agencies.
- Providing training to new and continuing LACEL users as needed.
- Generating and uploading the State quarterly report for the CDE.
- Receiving and screening requests for technical assistance; providing technical assistance for the LACEL system users.
- Ensuring appropriate consumer information is available to parents about the LACEL.
- Escalating technical issues to software vendor and providing input for future software developments.
- Ensuring maintenance of the servers.
- Producing and mailing the “Welcome to LACEL” introductory letter for newly registered families.

3.2 LACEL Policies and Procedures

Requests to review the LACEL Policies and Procedures may arise from parents or contractors/agencies.

3.2.1 Process for Changing the Policies and Procedures

Minor changes to the policies and procedures of the LACEL will be discussed and adopted by the LACEL Administrator after informal consultation with participating child development contractors. Informal consultation may include email, forums, and telephonic or in person conversations with major LACEL users, with LACEL users most likely to be impacted by the proposed change, or by any other means determined appropriate by the Administrator.

All CDE contractors will be given 30 days advance notice of any changes to the LACEL policies and procedures. The notice shall describe the informal consultation process used.

3.2.2 Periodic Comprehensive Reviews

For complete reviews of current Policies and Procedures or introduction of major new policies, the LACEL Administrator will convene an Advisory Committee made up of CDE contractors who choose to serve on the Committee. After reviewing and revising the policies and procedures, the draft document will be distributed to all CDE contractors for a review period of 30 days. Feedback from the review period will be considered by the Advisory Committee and incorporated as appropriate by consensus. The final document will be distributed again to all CDE contractors with a notice of required action that states that the contractor must inform the LACEL administrator by the stated deadline only if there is an objection to the revised Policies and Procedures.

4 Types of Child Care and Development Programs in the LACEL System

4.1 Subsidized Programs

The system is designed to help CDE-funded agencies and Head Start programs find children for available subsidized openings. The LACEL system can calculate eligibility for CDE-funded programs and for Head Start. The following is a list of the specific CDE-funded program

types for which eligibility can be determined. Not all contractors (Agencies) administer all of these program types.

California State Preschool Program (CSPP) (full time, part time)
General Center-based
Alternative Payment (AP) Program
CalWORKS Stage 2
CalWORKS Stage 3
Family Child Care Home Education Networks
Campus Child Care
Housing and Community Development Program
Handicapped
Migrant Child Care
California School Age Families Education (Cal-SAFE)

4.1.1 Participating Agencies

A participating Agency is a nonprofit or for-profit organization that has at least one contract with the CDE to offer child development services in the County of Los Angeles and who's Vendor Number and contact information has been released to the LACEL Administrator to add to the LACEL system.

4.2 Non CDE-Funded Child Care

There are many subsidies available in the County of Los Angeles not supported through the CDE. While the LACEL is designed specifically to facilitate access to CDE-funded child development programs, it is the intention of the Planning Committee to make the LACEL system available to Head Start agencies and to Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP) to maximize the opportunity for children to receive services. The system includes Head Start eligibility criteria for search purposes.

5. Managing Families in the LACEL System

5.1 Registering Families

5.1.1 Parents Access

It is the intent of the CDE that every contractor participates in assisting families to become registered on the LACEL. Each contractor can determine how they are able to assist families based on the agency's resources. With the help of CDE-contractors, families can apply for registration in LACEL either by telephone, in person, by mail, or by fax using a LACEL Intake Form or agency specific application containing all needed data elements as indicated on the LACEL Registration Form.

Not every Agency participating in LACEL will register families using the above methods. Each Agency will determine its own policy regarding the methods by which families contact them, receive applications or LACEL Intake forms, and are registered in LACEL.

5.1.2 Parent Self-registration

Because of the security model currently in place, parents are not able to access the LACEL database to register themselves. The current platform permits an interim application process that could be used by parents in a self-registration function in the future. However, at this time Los Angeles County policy is to have all LACEL applications entered by trained program staff.

5.1.3 Registration Form

A LACEL application prototype is available on the Office of Child Care Web site at www.childcare.lacounty.gov. The model applications are available for download in eight languages including English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Russian, Armenian, Cambodian, and Vietnamese. The Registration Form is designed to collect data requested by the CDE to determine a family's eligibility and to enable agencies to contact the family. Missing or incorrect information may cause the registration to be delayed or denied. The Registration Form also contains other information that will help determine future child development needs in Los Angeles County. Each agency registering families and or assisting them to access LACEL must obtain:

- Contact information including address, home and work/school zip codes, and pertinent telephone numbers
- All income sources and amounts for each parent/guardian in the household and for each foster child , if applicable
- Reason for needing child care (for each parent/guardian), if applicable
- Names and birthdates of all children in the household under the age of 18 (even children not needing care)
- Information regarding any disabilities or special needs of the children
- Preferred zip codes for care
- Family status (foster, guardian)
- Schedule of care for each child needing care

Other data collected in order to better understand the family situation and need:

- Employer or school name
- Primary language spoken
- Marital status of parent(s)
- Whether family is/has been on CalWORKS
- Name of the child's elementary school and grade
- Preferred provider of care

5.1.3.1 Agency Specific Forms

Agencies may reformat the Registration Form or create their own. However, the agency's form must include all fields from the form necessary to collect all needed information to create a complete record.

5.1.4 Adding a New Family Record

Staff designated to create new family records in the LACEL must adhere to the following procedures when transferring information from a LACEL Registration Form or doing a family intake over the phone.

5.1.4.1 Entry of Complete Records

Agencies that collect registration forms from families should make sure all data required from the family has been provided on the Registration Form, including income, before processing the registration. If information is missing, staff should contact the parent. (See 5.1.6.1)

5.1.4.2 Timely Entry of Family Record

It is *recommended* that users who enter family records take no more than two business days to enter a registration submitted by the parent even when the Agency's program(s) does not have open spaces. This prevents an unfair delay in access to openings in other programs for the families.

5.1.4.3 Search for Prior Registration

Before adding a new family record, a search for the applying parent and at least one child in the family should be performed to make certain that the family does not already have a record in the LACEL. If no record is found, the user may proceed to add the family to the system. If a record is found, the user may update the found record using the information supplied by the parent. **This preliminary search is critical to preventing duplicate records.**

5.1.5 Eligibility/Ineligibility

After a family's information has been entered into the LACEL database, the system will determine whether a family is currently eligible and for which program types based on the information provided by the parent. This eligibility check can be done immediately by the user clicking on the "update" button on the eligibility screen, under *Household*. If this is not done, the system will review each new record overnight and determine eligibility. The agency, if it chooses, may inform the family of its eligibility status.

If a family is not currently eligible for CDE-funded programs, the family record may remain on the LACEL database. Many of these families have incomes that are only slightly above the qualifying income and could be eligible for other, non-CDE subsidies or reduced fees offered through some agencies. An ineligible family record will not be displayed when a search is conducted for eligible families, so having the record on the database does not interfere with the LACEL functions.

5.1.5.1 Eligibility Verification

Agencies do not need to verify information provided by families at the time of the LACEL registration. Documentation will be required at the time of actual enrollment. However, if it is the agency's policy to do so, they may continue to request supporting documentation along with the Registration Form, as long as it does not impede families' access to the LACEL.

5.1.6 Special Circumstances When Registering Families on the LACEL

5.1.6.1 No "0" Income

No family record should be input with "0" income for all parents or guardians. This would immediately put them into rank "1" whether or not they should be there.

Agencies then run the risk of trying to enroll families whose rankings will change once documentation is provided.

In the case of teen parents who do not have an independent income, users registering the teen parent should ask about allowances, or the value of room and board as a way of identifying an income amount for the purposes of registering on the LACEL. This would be recorded as “other income”.

If a parent indicates they have no current source of income, they should be asked what they are living on. If their subsistence is in the form of financial assistance or in-kind assistance from their family or use of savings, the LACEL user should ask the value of what they receive or what they budget for each month. That is their monthly income for the purposes of registering on the LACEL. It should be listed as “other income”. If possible, they should be informed that they will need to produce documentation of their income if and when they are contacted to enroll.

5.1.6.2 Foster Child Income

Foster children are considered a family separate from the family of the foster parent and therefore only the foster care payments are counted as income. The amount of payment received for foster children should be entered under foster care income in the family details section in “child summary”. This is the income that displays when foster children appear on a search list. If the foster parent is not yet receiving any payment, the income can be left as a blank.

5.1.6.3 Unborn Children

A record should not be created for an unborn child. Date of birth, name, and need for care are data elements required to determine the child’s eligibility. Since the parent cannot yet provide all this information, the unborn child should not be listed. Advise parents to contact the agency when the child is born so that the child’s record can be added to the family record

5.1.7 Families Who Refuse to be on the LACEL

A family may choose not to be registered on LACEL. This does not mean that they may never be contacted to enroll, if they are eligible. It does mean that they are not on any list and must constantly contact the program where they wish to enroll. The program can enroll them as a “walk-in” if certain conditions are met. (See Sections 5.4.6, 5.4.7)

5.1.8 Using the LACEL for College Campus-based Programs

College campus child development programs are waived from having to use the LACEL for the purposes of enrolling children if their contracts state that students have first priority for their programs. In these cases, the campus program may maintain a separate waiting list of students/parents. However, campus programs must use the LACEL to register families whose needs cannot be met by the campus-program. For example, if a program cannot serve all the families asking for services due to space limitations, un-served families should be placed on the LACEL. If a student family has children needing care who are too young or too old for the campus program, that family should be registered on the LACEL with the hope of another subsidy program offering care to their un-served children. In the case of campus programs that also serve the local community, the community families will need to be placed

on the LACEL and the campus will have to search the LACEL to find the most eligible families to fill spaces not taken by student parents.

5.2 Searching for Eligible Children to Fill Vacancies

5.2.1 Conducting a Search in the LACEL

Each participating agency has access to the functions in the LACEL that allow them to search for children, in their own service areas, for specific program types and by age. Unless an agency is a campus-based program and is exempt from using the LACEL to enroll (see 5.1.8), the LACEL must be searched for eligible children first when an agency has openings.

Agencies with openings in any type of CDE-funded program, or in Head Start are able to search the LACEL database for the most eligible children with “active” or “enrolled waiting” status. The agency user conducting the search begins in the Child Utility (for individual centers) or the Family Utility (for AP Programs and CalWORKS). Family Child Care Home Education Networks (FCCHEN) can use either utility depending on the particular parameters of the contract. The user goes to the “Active and Enrolled/Waiting” status category. In the search screen, the user can indicate the search criteria (i.e. ages, program type, zip codes) and the number of vacancies the program needs to fill.

5.2.1.1 Vacancy to Results Ratio

The current system operates on a search ratio of one to two. That is, for every one vacancy, the search should result in two most eligible children/families. For instance, if the agency has 10 vacancies, the user types “10” into the “Vacancies” field. The result of the search would be a list of 20 most eligible children/families to be contacted. In the case of AP Programs, the user will have to estimate the number of children that can be enrolled based on available funds. If the search results in less than twice as many names as vacancies, it is an indication that there are not that many eligible children in the system who meet the stated search criteria. Searches may be conducted for more children than the current vacancies.

This ratio can be changed by the LACEL Administrator based on the desires of the user agencies.

5.2.2 Zip Code Based Searches

In most cases, the user will search for eligible families using the zip code of home residence. This search should be done first in order to ensure access to families living within the program’s service area. However, some agencies also serve families from other areas who may work close by or simply prefer the contractor’s program. The LACEL system allows families to specify a “preferred” zip code other than the home zip code, and the CDE requires that, where possible, the work/school site zip code be recorded.

Agencies may then conduct additional searches for families based on the “preferred” zip code or the work/school site zip codes. The system allows for searches where all categories of zip code are indicated (home, work, preferred) simultaneously.

5.2.3 Changing Status during Search and Enrollment functions

When an agency searches for children/families to contact for enrollment, the resulting records can be marked with a status change from “**active**” to “**pending**”. This means that the agency that conducted the search has exclusive access to those records in order to contact and, hopefully, enroll the children/families. Because the records are no longer in the “active” pool, there is a limit for the length of time the agency can have exclusive access to them. The time limit for the **pending** status is 15 days. During this period, it is expected that the agency will contact or attempt to make contact with the families on the search list, in order to make appointments for enrolling.

It is recommended that agencies change child/family status only when a child is actually enrolled. After conducting a search, the user prints out the contact list, families are contacted and appointments to enroll are made. Once the paperwork is completed, the user must re-enter a search for the particular child and mark the child’s record as enrolled.

5.2.4 Search Results

The searches described above will result in a list of “most eligible” children (or families) by ranking and with other priorities clearly indicated. These other priorities would include Child Protective Services (CPS), or Continuity of Care (CC). The priorities are combined with income rankings to produce the “most eligible” list for the particular program and area for which the search was conducted. A typical list might have several names, with various rankings. Regardless of ranking number, a record indicating CPS or CC status will appear at the top of the list. All other families/children will appear in income rank order beginning with rank #1. In the cases where a search results in families/children with different “rankings”, the children with “1” would always be at the top, lower rankings would follow in numerical order. If a list has only rank “1” families, the families will be listed in order of date of application.

5.2.5 Super Priorities

Super priorities are specifically defined categories of children with special circumstances. Prioritizing the circumstances is intended to ensure that these children have easier access to subsidy programs. The current super priorities that have been defined by the CDE, are:

5.2.5.1 Continuity of Care (CC)

A child’s record can be changed to a CC status when the child is close to timing out of a program due to age, but remains eligible for subsidized services with other providers. The family may request to be placed back into the LACEL using the CC status. The CC status allows the child to appear on top of all lists for care in their area. Agencies should activate or add the record 30 days prior to the expected termination of services and add a note with the actual date of termination.

The CC status is time limited to 30 days. If the child is not enrolled by another program within this time period, the record will revert to the “Active” status automatically by the LACEL and the child will lose his/her priority status, but the record will remain on the LACEL.

Other uses of CC status are: a) to allow families to transfer their service because of recent relocation or a change of employment, and b) to seek additional service hours because their current provider does not meet their need for child care, i.e. need for evening or weekend care that is not met by a center-based program.

Important Note: The CC status is not applicable to children enrolled in a non-CDE program nor does it apply to part day, part year CSPP enrolled children. This status is not to be used to transfer parents other than for the stated cases and should not be used for parents waiting for a “preferred” type of program to have an opening. If parents are not happy with current subsidized care, they can terminate care and re-register in the LACEL as an “Active” status without the priority of CC.

5.2.5.2 Child Protective Services

A child’s record is marked CPS by the user on the child screen. Children entered into the LACEL by the DCFS are all marked with the CPS flag. Some parents with DCFS cases may contact agencies directly. Whether the record is created by the DCFS or by an agency at a parent’s request, a proper notation needs to be entered in the family record that states the DCFS Case Number, the duration of the CPS referral and the contact information for the Children’s Services Worker (CSW) managing the case. The wording of the note should be similar to: *“name of child” has an open case with the DCFS: Case Number. This referral will expire X months after this note. For more information contact CSW – “name of the CSW”- at – telephone #.* A child’s record should not be flagged as CPS without the proper notation.

5.2.5.3 Special Needs (SN)

The special needs marker is set by the user within each child’s screen. Although there are several “special needs” categories that can be checked on the child screen, only the Individualized Education Program (IEP) or the Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) trigger the flag by the system for priority status. The IFSP is a written plan for providing early intervention services to children with exceptional needs ages 0 to 3. An IEP is a written plan for children ages 3 to 22. If at the time of completing the LACEL Registration Form, the parent states receiving services for at least one of their children through the Regional Center, the User would include a simple notation in the child’s page to reflect the exceptional need of the child. When a child is flagged with an IEP or IFSP, the record will indicate this in the search list. Children with a SN flag do not supersede other priorities or ranks, but within a rank will appear first in the listing.

5.3 Contacting Families after a Search

5.3.1 Verifying and Updating Information

Agency staff who contact families following a search of the LACEL, **are advised** to ask each family if any eligibility related information has changed prior to setting an enrollment appointment. The LACEL allows the user to print out a 9600 report on each family or a Child or Family Contact list, both of which contain key information in the LACEL database. These are useful tools for the initial contact. It is recommended that Agency staff inform parents of all the documentation required when they contact families to review current information and set the enrollment appointments.

5.3.1.1 Updating

As agency staff contact families, they are responsible for updating any information in the family's LACEL record, whether or not the agency ultimately enrolls the child/family. This can be done as part of the first contact discussed above.

5.3.1.2 Inability to Contact Family

In the situation where the agency has attempted to reach a family, but is unable to make contact, the family can be returned to the LACEL without the required updating of information. However, it would be helpful for staff to document in the case notes section that an attempt was made to contact the family, but was unsuccessful. Several unsuccessful attempts could trigger an attempt by the Administrator to determine if the family record should remain as active.

5.3.2. Documenting Use of the LACEL

The contact list alone or contact list with a tracking sheet attached may be used for noting when a contact was attempted, when parents were contacted, which families have appointments to enroll and which have enrolled or declined, and which could not be reached. This notated list should be retained as part of the agencies CPM review.

5.3.3 Order of Contact

All families/children listed on the contact lists resulting from a search can be contacted simultaneously. The agency does not have to make contact only with the "top" family first and only when that family responds or fails to respond, attempt to contact the second family in line. However, if children with higher number ranks or without super priorities are enrolled over children with lower number ranks, CDE guidance recommends documenting why this occurred. (See 5.3.2)

5.3.4 Change in Ranking at the Time of Contact

Families (children) identified through searches may end up with a change in rank at the time of enrollment due to more accurate income and family information provided by the parent. The family rank may change to the point that the family is no longer one of the "most eligible" families in the search. In these cases, the user should re-rank the family. If no children in the family are enrolled or the family's new rank puts them beyond the most eligible for enrollment purposes, the user should update the information in the LACEL. If the re-ranking indicates the family is still in the most eligible range, the user can proceed with the enrollment process.

Example: A search produces a contact list where all the children (or families) are ranked "1" (lowest income by family size). When one of the families is contacted and their information reviewed and updated, it means a change in their rank from "1" to "5". That family would be returned to the LACEL with an updated record and the agency user would conduct another search for lower ranked families.

In the case where a search has turned up children (families) of multiple rankings, and a review of eligibility changes one family's rank just prior to enrollment, the family may still be enrolled if its new rank is within the range identified by the original search. **Example:** A search for a particular program in a specific area results in 10 families with rankings between "1" and "5". A family whose original rank was a "1" is contacted and their information updated. This results in the rank being adjusted to "3". The family could still be enrolled, because the new rank does not exceed rank "5".

5.4 Enrolling a Child

5.4.1 Enrolled Status on the LACEL

Each time a child is enrolled in a program from the LACEL, the enrolling agency must **promptly** pull up the child's record and change the status to "enrolled" so that the child's (or family's) record does not display when another agency conducts a search to enroll. Agencies should change status only when a child is actually enrolled.

If only one child from a family was enrolled, other children in the family or the family itself will still have "active" status.

5.4.2 Partially Enrolled Marker

The **partially enrolled** box on a child's screen is checked if the child is enrolled in a part-day preschool program and the family still needs full-day care; or a child is enrolled in a program offering care during the day, but the family needs evening and weekend care as well. The child retains the "Active" status in these cases.

5.4.3 Enrolling Children Already Enrolled in another Program

It may occur that a child enrolled in one type of program is still "Active" because the parent is looking for another type of subsidy program for that child (e.g. partially enrolled marker, section 5.4.2). When a search in the LACEL identifies the already enrolled child as most eligible, the user must contact the parent and the other CDE-funded program in which the child is currently enrolled. The program in which the child is currently enrolled needs to be informed that the child may be, if the parent chooses, transferred from one subsidy program to another or become dually enrolled (e.g. part-day CSPP and AP Program). No change in status to "enrolled" can be made until all parties are informed.

Users may contact the LACEL Administrator to help in connecting with other agencies in this transfer of enrollment process or in any other circumstance where the agency cannot access the record of the child to be enrolled.

5.4.4 Family Refuses Opportunity to Enroll

Families may refuse to accept enrollments and remain on the LACEL with "active" status if the family is still eligible. However, such refusals should be documented in the case note section of the family record along with the name of any preferred program or agency that the parent has named. However, if the parent states that the family does not currently need/want child development services, the user may terminate that family record after informing the parent that they will no longer be active on the LACEL. The parent must also be told that the record can become active again at any time by contacting a CDE-funded agency and updating the family's information.

5.4.6 Recruitment and Enrollment Outside of the LACEL

There are circumstances in which recruitment of children may involve activities beyond a search in the LACEL Database.

5.4.6.1 CSPP

Agencies providing CSPP services may need to rely on recruitment methods other than the LACEL for meeting their enrollment requirements. Particularly, when a large

number of children must be enrolled within a specific timeframe, an agency may want to enroll walk-in families who qualify. This is permitted if these procedures are followed per CDE directive:

1. Utilize the LACEL to identify families that are eligible/waiting for a CSPP. Keep a printout of this list for your records. Contact families identified from the LACEL to come in during the enrollment week(s) to fill out an application and update their income.
2. At the same time that the applications of the potential enrollees from the LACEL list are being reviewed, review applications from (1) families currently receiving services in a CSPP, and 2) from those families not on the LACEL but who are applying during the enrollment period (“walk-ins”).
3. From these three sources merge all families according to income rank, and then enroll the most eligible families.
4. Three year old children currently being served do not have to go on the LACEL to be considered for the next preschool year.

5.4.6.2 Dual Recruitment Strategy

There is a circumstance in which an agency might use the LACEL list **and** enroll walk-ins simultaneously, whether or not they are a CSPP. If the agency is enrolling a large number of children and the LACEL search has resulted in fewer eligible children than the available vacancies, then the agency can enroll walk-ins at the same time as they contact families from the LACEL list. An agency may also use the LACEL simultaneously with other recruitment practices. The agency may choose to add non-LACEL families (i.e. walk-ins) to the LACEL prior to actually enrolling anyone so that a complete list of eligible families in priority order is prepared from the LACEL. An agency is not required to enter families contacted through community outreach into the LACEL unless the agency cannot serve the family.

5.4.7 Enrollments without Using LACEL

If a child was enrolled without searching the LACEL, the agency **must not** create a LACEL record and then change the status to “enrolled”. This distorts the data.

5.5 When a Selected Child Does Not Become Enrolled

5.5.1 Parent Does Not Respond in Time

Generally, when vacancies occur the program needs to fill them as quickly as possible. Families forfeit the opportunity to verify their eligibility and be considered for services when they fail to respond or respond too late to the agency that has contacted them. Each agency may implement its own timelines and processes for enrollment. For instance, an Agency’s policy may state that if a family has not responded to two telephone call attempts at different times over at least 48 hours, the family record on the contact list would be noted as “unable to contact”. Or, if the agency mails out a notice to all families on the contact list simultaneously, the notice should have a deadline by which the family must respond. More time should be given to respond to mailed notices to allow for the mail delivery process. There are no special provisions for families who are unavailable (out of town, for instance) when an agency attempts to contact them

Notices returned to the Agency as undeliverable may indicate that there is an error in the contact information or that the family is no longer at the address given. The Agency may choose to call the family to verify the address, but this is not required. The family record should be terminated from LACEL if the contact information is not correct. (See Section 5.7.3)

There are no special provisions for families who are unavailable (out of town, for instance) when an agency attempts to contact them. Families in this situation will be returned to “**active**” status in the LACEL.

5.5.2 Change in Rank

Families (children) identified through searches may end up with a change in rank at the time of enrollment due to more accurate income and family information provided by the parent. The family rank may change to the point that the family is no longer one of the “most eligible”. In these cases, the family record will be updated and the record returned as “active” to the LACEL. (See section 5.3.4)

5.5.3 Family Refuses Enrollment Opportunity

A family may refuse an enrollment opportunity for a variety of reasons. The program with the opening is not convenient for the family, the family prefers another program type, or current circumstances (illness, etc.) may preclude a family from taking the opening when offered. Families may refuse to take enrollments and remain on the LACEL with “active” status, if the family is still eligible.

Such refusals should be documented in the case note section of the family record. After three such refusals, the LACEL Administrator may contact the family to verify their continuing need for subsidized child care. If it appears the family is not in need of, or prepared to take advantage of subsidized care that may be offered, the LACEL Administrator may change the family’s status to “terminated”, which effectively moves the record out of active status. The family would be notified of their change of status and the family would be invited to contact any LACEL Agency when their circumstances change.

5.6 Updating Records

5.6.1 Families’ Responsibilities

Each family should update their information whenever there is a change in their circumstances and, in any case, at least every three months. This can be done by telephone or in person at participating Agencies’ offices, at their local R&R, or by calling the Office of Child Care. If a family’s record is not updated within a three month period, the LACEL Administrator will send the family a copy of their LACEL record, asking them to update their record by mail or by calling the Office of Child Care to remain active on the LACEL. Families who do not update their record within 30 calendar days will be removed from the Active list and placed in the Archive list by the system. Within one year, the archived record may be brought back to the Active list if the family contacts the Office of Child Care or a participating Agency, but the family may lose their “waiting time” on the list.

5.6.2 Agency Users are Responsible for Updating Any Information in the Family's LACEL Record

If agency users have any contact with families on the LACEL, they should check on the accuracy of basic contact information, family income, etc. This can be done as part of the first enrollment contact discussed above. If a parent contacts the Agency with questions, staff should always take the opportunity to update the family record.

5.6.3 Updating and Removing Duplicative Records

Duplicate records are usually created when an agency enters a new record without first checking to see if an entry already exists for a family, thus creating a second or third record for the same family in the LACEL. Duplicate records are a problem for agencies seeking to enroll and they make it difficult to provide an "unduplicated count" of children and families waiting for subsidized child development programs, which is one of the primary purposes of the LACEL system.

It is the responsibility of all users of the system to avoid creating duplicate records and to delete a duplicate after first verifying which record is the most accurate and up-to-date. Usually the record with the oldest application date should be used and updated with information from more recent records. Once the update is complete, the newer record(s) may be deleted. **Note: This is the only time that users should delete records.**

5.7 Terminating and Archiving

Family and child records are NOT removed from the LACEL. The delete function should be used only to correct the information in the LACEL when a duplicate application for a same family is found (see 5.6.3). There are circumstances in which a child or family record becomes unavailable for enrollment and needs to be removed from the active list. **Terminating** a record removes the family from the active list without removing the family permanently from the system, allowing for accurate reporting to the CDE. Terminating a record and keeping it in the LACEL allows the family to be reinstated to the active list if they contact a participating agency in the future.

The following are circumstances in which a record may be terminated:

- Child/family obtains subsidized child care through a non-CDE contractor
- Family requests to be removed from the system
- There is clear evidence that the family cannot be reached, i.e. returned mail
- Parent has started the enrollment process, but has failed to complete the enrollment process and has not contacted the agency
- The record was not updated by the parent after four months (Archived). Archiving is done automatically by the system when a record has not been changed or saved within a four month period. If the frequency of updates changes, then the length of time before the archive function is employed is changed. It is always one month longer than the period for updating.

5.7.1 Child/Family Obtains Subsidized Care through a Non-CDE Contractor.

When the LACEL Administrator through the update process or an agency user has contact with a family who states that the child (children) have received care through a non-CDE

funded program **and they no longer need subsidized care**, the user should **change the child's status to terminated**. This will mean the child's record is no longer active. Families should be informed that if their circumstances change and they need subsidized care at another time, they may contact the agency to have their record reactivated.

5.7.2 By Request

A family may request that its record be terminated any time. Some families when contacted through the updating process ask to have their records removed from LACEL as they are no longer interested or no longer have a child care need.

5.7.3 Inability to Contact Family

If there is clear evidence that the contact information for the family is inaccurate thus making it impossible to contact the family, the record may be terminated. Clear evidence would include returned mail, a disconnected telephone, or a statement by someone connected to family that they have moved out of the area.

5.7.4 Failure to Complete the Enrollment Process

It may occur that a family found through the LACEL begins the process to enroll, but fails to provide needed documents or does not start the child in care when authorized to do so. If the family fails to contact the enrolling agency with any explanation, the agency users should find the family record in the LACEL and terminate it.

5.7.5 Failure to Respond during the Update Process

In order to keep the information in the database up-to-date, the LACEL Administrator will regularly look for families whose records have not been changed within three months. The LACEL Administrator will send a copy of the family's record to the family's contact address requesting they update their record by mail, or by calling or e-mailing the LACEL Administrator, in order to remain active on the LACEL. Family records that are not updated within 30 calendar days of receipt of the update form will be archived. The family record may be reactivated when the family contacts a participating agency or the LACEL Administrator.

5.7.6 Archiving

Regardless of the status of the record, if the record remains untouched for four months, it will automatically be archived. These records can be retrieved should the family make contact after the archiving has taken place.

5.8 Failure to Pay Parent Fees

If a parent fails to pay required family fees resulting in the termination of child care services with a participating Agency, the family becomes ineligible for subsidized services funded by the CDE in the County of Los Angeles until they have paid all fees.

5.8.1 Status on the LACEL

If the family was previously listed in the LACEL, the terminating agency can change the family record to "Terminated" status and add a note that will indicate that non-payment of fees was involved and which agency to call. Only staff from the terminating agency that previously provided services and/or the LACEL Database Manager can reinstate the family back to Active if they were terminated due to failure to pay family fees.

6 Parent Outreach and Communication

6.1 The Welcome Letter

The LACEL Administrator will send all new parents a “Welcome to LACEL” letter within two weeks of a user entering a family record in the LACEL. This letter describes the LACEL system and alerts parents of their responsibilities when registered on the LACEL. As stated in this letter, the parent is responsible for:

- Keeping their information up-to-date by calling the agency that initially entered their information or the Office of Child Care when any changes in their situation occur.
- Responding promptly to enrollment calls, enrollment letters, and to keep or reschedule appointments set by an agency when attempting to provide services to the children in the family.
- Providing documentation that verifies the eligibility and need for services. Failure to prove the family’s eligibility and need for services may cause the services to be denied.

In addition, the “Welcome to LACEL” letter will include the list of agencies serving the Service Planning Area in which the parent resides, a description of the funded program types, and a list of common documentation that will be required.

6.2 Complaints Arising from Length of Time on the LACEL

6.2.1. The CEL is not a Waiting List

Many complaints from families may be due to the fact that the parents do not understand that the LACEL is not a “waiting list”, but an eligibility list which prioritizes need. There are families on the LACEL who may never be served because their income is a little higher than the income of thousands of other families. This places them at a lower ranking (higher number) and so the family’s record may never turn up in a search for the “most eligible”.

6.2.2 Use of LACEL Brochures and Fact Sheets

When parents register for the LACEL, they should be given the LACEL fact sheet or brochure available in eight languages at www.childcare.lacounty.gov. The brochure explains how the LACEL works.

6.2.3 Parent Voices Referral

Nevertheless, when agencies receive complaint calls about how long a family has been waiting, agency staff may encourage the parents to contact Parent Voices. The contact information is:

Parent Voices
(415) 343-3383
parentvoices@childrenscouncil.org
<http://www.parentvoices.org/>

Parent Voices is a project of the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network (the Network). This chapter organization works to improve access to child care for all families in their communities, in California, and in the United States. Parent Voices is coordinated by the Network, and hosted by the R&Rs. Parent Voices combines leadership development, advocacy, and community organizing in its efforts to increase funding, improve quality, and provide better access to child care.

6.3 Filing a Complaint

LACEL families have the right to file complaints regarding the operation of the LACEL. Complaints should be filed with the LACEL Administrator:

LACEL Administrator
Office of Child Care
Within the Services Integration Branch of the Chief Executive Office
County of Los Angeles
222 South Hill Street, 5th Floor
Los Angeles, California 90012
Office: (213) 947-4102
Technical Assistance: (213) 893-0504
Fax: (213) 217-5106
lescobedo@ceo.lacounty.gov

6.3.1 Review of Complaints

Complaints will be reviewed immediately by the LACEL Administrator in light of stated policies and procedures and the CDE requirements.

6.3.2 Agency Error

If the LACEL Administrator finds an error on the part of any agency in carrying out the stated policies or procedures, the Agency will be contacted and advised of the error, and asked to make any needed corrections to its process in using the LACEL.

6.3.3 LACEL Administrator Error

If the error has been on the part of the LACEL Administrator, the LACEL Administrator will correct its own procedures and inform all participating LACEL Agencies. In any cases where families have been deleted, terminated, or archived in error, the status of the family record will be changed to “active” providing the family is still eligible.

7 System Maintenance and Technical Assistance

7.1 System Servers

The servers hosting the Web site and the LACEL database are housed with the County of Los Angeles. Maintenance and repair of the servers are handled through the Internal Services Department of the County of Los Angeles through an agreement with the Service Integration Branch, Office of Child Care.

7.2 Application Maintenance

Los Angeles County, through the Service Integration Branch/Office of Child Care as the LACEL Administrator, holds a maintenance and support contract with Controltec. By means of this contract, the LACEL periodically receives upgrades and enhancements to the basic application.

7.2.1 Application Support

Controltec is available to analyze and correct system flaws as reported through the LACEL Administrator. Individual LACEL users at agencies should report problems or pass on questions about the system to their Agency Leads. The Agency Leads then carry the problem or question forward to the LACEL Administrator. It is the responsibility of the staff of the LACEL Administrator to determine if the LACEL Administrator or staff can directly assist with the problem or question, or whether it will be forwarded to Controltec for resolution. Inquiries and requests to Controltec must go through the LACEL Administrator.

8 Security

8.1 Data Protection

All data transmission will be protected. Users will log on to a secure Web site using a unique ID and password. Only the LACEL Administrator will have access to some reporting features and user profiles. The site is also built so that all data being transferred between the LACEL database and the participating Agencies will be encrypted with 128-bit encryption. This means that it is virtually impossible to “steal” any family information as it gets routed through various Internet hubs on its way to the participating Agency.

8.1.1 Passwords

Each Agency User will have his/her own unique ID number and password. This will be needed for logging on to the LACEL system. Each participating LACEL Agency will have its own unique identifying number.

Agencies are responsible for maintaining the integrity of their User’s log-on information. User names and passwords may be changed by the LACEL Administrator at the request of the Agency Lead or directly by the Agency Lead. Users who no longer work at the Agency or who no longer work in a department where the need to use LACEL exists should be **locked** out by the Agency lead.

8.1.2 Updating Agency Information

Agency Leads must contact the LACEL Administrator to update agency information in the LACEL system including new funding types, change of headquarters and contact information, and the addition of new staff. New staff will be required to complete Confidentiality forms, which are submitted to the LACEL Administrator.