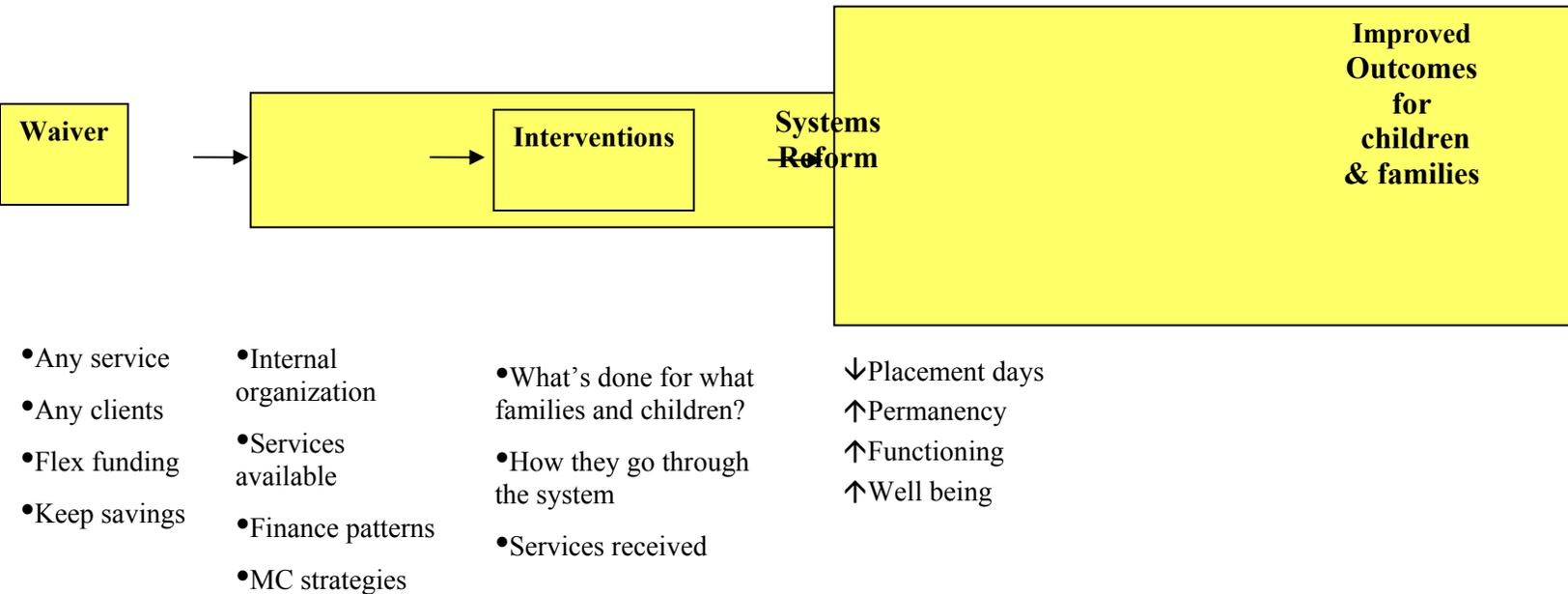


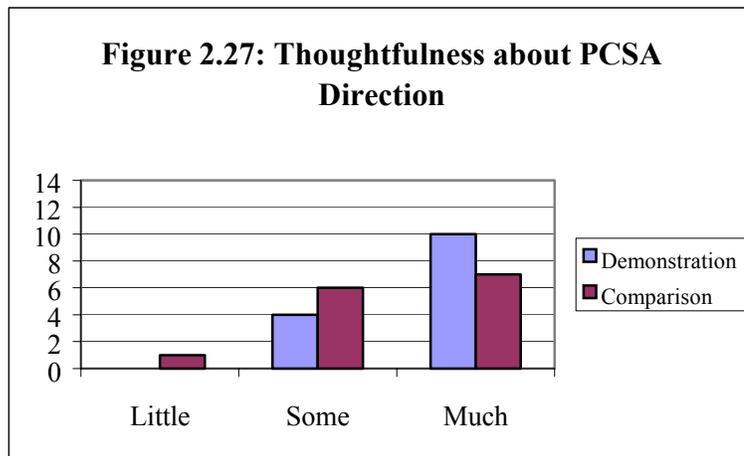
## 2.4 PERCEPTIONS OF THE WAIVER’S IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

For many demonstration counties, the Title IV-E Waiver represents a vital opportunity to pursue a child welfare reform agenda, because it offers an unusual degree of flexibility in the use of funds and because it provides a predictable amount of money as a pre-payment, rather than a reimbursement for expenses incurred. The evaluation team has been guided by a theory of change, called a *logic model*, which argues that the Waiver should lead to internal restructuring, which in turn should lead to changes in service interventions for children and families, which in turn should lead to improved outcomes for those children and families (Exhibit 2.3). In both Year 2 and Year 3 of the evaluation, the study team discussed with interviewees their own local view of the change process, in an effort to elucidate a specific logic model for each of the 28 PCSAs.

Exhibit 2.3: Example of Logic Model



Across both the demonstration and comparison groups, counties voiced quite varied expectations about what they hope to achieve, and, among demonstration counties, how the Waiver could further their particular reform vision. In the Year 2 interviews, demonstration counties appeared to have a clearer sense of where they want to go with the agency, how they want to get there, and how they expect these system change efforts to affect outcomes for the children and families served by the PCSA. Figure 2.27 illustrates this greater degree of thoughtfulness observed among the leadership in the demonstration counties.



**Summary:** The evaluation team explored how demonstration counties view the Waiver as being able to impact the PCSA and the larger community. Several themes were evident among demonstration counties. Demonstration counties have made significant progress in trying to become more accountable both internally and externally, developing methods to consistently and reliably serve PCSA clients. Demonstration counties have also made progress in improving the provision of PCSA services, reconfiguring the way services are provided and creating new PCSA services to better meet the individualized needs of PCSA clients. Lastly, demonstration counties are focusing on building relationships among child serving entities and with the public, as well as better supporting the needs of PCSA workers, although these themes are less prevalent than the first two mentioned.

### 2.4.1 Logic Model Themes

In the Second Annual Report of the evaluation, the study team identified five system reforms themes that were common to both comparison counties and demonstration counties. These themes emerged from the discussions held with PCSA administrators, managers, and other visionary individuals in each county. In the Year 3 interviews, in which many of those same leaders participated, the study team explored the question of how the Waiver and Waiver-related activities have affected the PCSA and the larger community. Naturally, this question pertained only to the demonstration counties. The responses speak to two things: refinements in the original logic model, as PCSA leaders begin to realize the potential of the Waiver; and perceptions of progress the county is making toward its vision of systems reform.

**Exhibit 2.4 Logic Model Themes:**

- ◆ Increased accountability
- ◆ Supports for PCSA workers
- ◆ Improved provision of services within the PCSA
- ◆ Building relationships among child serving entities
- ◆ Building relationships with the public

The following section describes each of the five system reform themes common among demonstration counties.

### *Accountability*

Most demonstration counties (eleven) are focusing agency attention on developing systems that create accountability and ensure high standards for their PCSA (Table 2.10). For example, several counties are in the process of formalizing their agency policies and procedures to make sure that effective, efficient, and consistent services are delivered in all areas of the agency. To pursuit of greater agency accountability, two demonstration counties have recently completed the extensive accreditation process of the Council on Accreditation.

Accountability is being built in all areas of the PCSAs, not just in the provision of direct services. Financial stability continues to be an important goal for several counties, who emphasize the expansion of their resource pools in order to ensure continuous financial health of the agency. Demonstration counties are also very consciously focusing on quality assurance, utilization review, and use of outcomes that will enable the administration to make sound agency decisions and improve the services offered.

The energy put toward improving accountability appears to be having results. Ten of the eleven counties report progress on this theme – successful efforts to obtain accreditation, use of outcomes to guide decision-making, and other activities are seen as having a positive effect on the PCSA’s view of itself and on how it believes it is perceived by the larger community.

### *Support for PCSA Workers*

Counties are struggling to find ways to serve an increasingly more varied population of children and families with a multitude of issues. In Year 2, several strategies were identified to support PCSA workers. These include: 1) supporting front-line workers, 2) increasing the salaries of line staff, 3) improving the supervisor to worker ratio, 4) building leadership in supervisors. 5) restructuring units to allow for specialization, and 6) developing team structures in their agencies. Overall, administrators believe these strategies will enable staff to better address the needs of the children and families in the PCSA system. Year 3 interviews revealed that counties are still pursuing these goals, but progress is difficult – high turnover rates among casework staff still plague a number of agencies, despite improvement in management systems and supervisory support. One county indicated that improved supervision of staff is beginning to improve staff retention, which will increase continuity for families and ultimately improve outcomes.

### *Provision of Services within PCSA*

In Year 3 interviews, a majority of respondents (eight) report substantial activity to improve service provision. Within the PCSA, many agencies are trying to reconfigure the way they provide services to children and families, decreasing or even preventing the need for the family to be involved in the PCSA system. Many counties are focusing on providing more intensive and preventive services at the beginning of the case in order to serve families and children more quickly. Specifically, counties are seeking to offer more home-based, prevention, and family preservation services to resolve issues before they reach a crisis.

Counties are also trying to create a system that provides services that are more individualized to the needs of the client, rather than the traditional cookie-cutter delivery of services. This includes trying to involve families in the decision making process, as well as developing specialized units that have expertise and knowledge of the resources available for a particular population. Lastly, PCSAs are trying to provide a broader array of services to meet the multiple needs of many clients, often developing new services within the PCSA or contracting out for the most needed services. In particular, one county has deliberately reduced its reliance on residential treatment, and has shifted traditional licensed foster care to kinship homes in the community. By providing more appropriate and individualized services, counties believe that clients will be better served and remain in the child welfare system for shorter amounts of time.

#### *Building Relationships Among Child-Serving Entities*

While many demonstration PCSAs are focusing on improving the way child welfare services are provided, PCSA administrators are also focusing on developing relationships in the broader community and building the capacity of the entire county to provide services for children and families. This starts by building relationships with the other entities that serve the PCSA population. By improving relationships, agencies are more willing to team together to collaborate on the development of new opportunities in the community, and potentially even pool resources.

Increasing collaboration can lead to the development of new services that can be accessed by PCSA clients. Specifically, demonstration counties have worked with other child serving agencies to develop early intervention services, prevention programs (e.g. mental health and substance abuse), and wrap-around programs. Some PCSAs are also creating more neighborhood based service networks to better fit the specific needs of a community, providing a spectrum of targeted services in the areas of highest need. Overall, counties are trying to examine the existing array of services and create a more seamless, less fragmented system for families to navigate. In building these relationships and developing new services, PCSA leaders believe that the community as a whole will be better able to serve children and families, avoiding expensive placements that disrupt family and community ties.

Table 2.10 makes it clear that demonstration counties are making progress on this theme, with seven respondents noting improvements in interagency relationships and greater creativity in the collaborative ventures. Several counties spoke of collaborative strategic planning efforts, which have brought new partners to the table in meaningful ways.

#### *Building Relationships with the Public*

Complementing efforts to improve interagency relationships, nearly as many demonstration counties are committed to building stronger relations with the community at large. Six counties noted this thrust as part of their vision for the future, and something which they believed that Waiver participation would advance. Public perception of the PCSA is typically gauged by the success of the most recent levy campaign, or by the latest media coverage, neither of which is fully reflective of how neighborhood residents and community

leaders view the agency’s value. Increasingly, PCSA administrators are trying to better inform the public about the role, responsibility, and philosophy of the PCSA, and seeking to engage more community members in volunteer capacities. Table 2.10 shows an unusual pattern for this theme – more counties noting progress than identified it as important in Year 2. The explanation is that additional counties have come to realize how much participation in the Waiver contributes to improved community relations. As the PCSA is able to field innovative prevention efforts, support family-focused activities in the schools, and generally broaden the reach of child welfare, community members begin to appreciate the central role the agency plays. Ultimately, PCSA leaders believe such improved community perceptions will lead to more cohesive county-wide efforts to support children and families.

<b>Table 2.10: Progress on Logic Model Themes</b>		
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Number of counties identifying this theme</b>	<b>Number of counties noting progress on the theme</b>
Accountability	11	10
Supports for PCSA workers	5	1
Improved provisions of services within the PCSA	12	8
Building relationships among child serving entities	8	7
Building relationships with the public	6	7

In Year 4 site visits, the study team will explore this issue further with both demonstration counties and comparison sites, to glean from a variety of perspectives how system reform activities are seen by the greater community in each county. Year 2 data suggest that the reform focus in comparison counties differs sharply from demonstration counties, with a greater number of comparison counties focused on building relationships with other child-serving entities and with the public.

Leaders who have a clear vision for change (Exhibit 2.4) can be expected to be more willing to alter agency operations, if they see a direct link between the actions and their ultimate goal for the agency. Among the ten demonstration counties in Year 2 who had a clear vision for the future of the PCSA, eight rank high on the index of managed care activity (see Table 2.4 above). These counties are cognizant of the potential impact of the Waiver and are more ready to take risks with managed care strategies, than are other counties.

In future years of the evaluation, these logic models will be followed systematically to explore whether counties’ expectations are being realized, and to see whether the very fact of having voiced a clear picture of the future influences how well system reform is achieved.