

# Fresno County County Peer Review Visit Summary

December 31, 2010



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Welfare to Work Division

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## **Executive Summary**

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### **Introduction**

The County Peer Review (CPR) Program was created for county peers and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to perform on-site reviews of counties' Welfare-to-Work (WTW) programs to identify and share promising practices, opportunities for improvement, and strategies that could positively impact work participation rates (WPR). Fresno County volunteered to host a CPR in January 2010 to focus attention on areas they felt would be of interest to other service providers and benefit Fresno County's California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program.

### **Fresno County Department of Social Services**

The Fresno CalWORKs program is composed of Employment Services staff with service provided at 4455/4449 E. Kings Canyon Road Fresno, CA 93702. Rural offices also exist throughout Fresno County providing various services to the clients. The county's job specialists assist clients in receiving WTW Services. Staff is divided among multiple offices and are divided into different functions with some staff managing an ongoing "generic" caseload and others maintaining "specialized" caseloads. The specialization is based on activity placement, language needs, or other needs of clients.

### **Site Visit General Information**

The review was performed in Fresno County on January 11 to 13, 2010 and consisted of three days at the Fresno County Department of Social Services offices. Major activities consisted of staff interviews, client focus groups, and case management observations (CMOs) with county staff.

Interviews were completed with various CalWORKs WTW staff. A total of eight CMOs were completed by the CPR team and 12 interviews with staff. The client focus groups were conducted with a total of 41 clients from job workshop classes.

### **Scope**

The focus areas for this CPR included a review of the referral process for mental health and substance abuse services, a review of the county's ability to identify barriers upfront, and identifying ways of improving the work participation rate (WPR).

### **Promising Practices**

Some of the significant promising practices identified include the following:

- The county's use of the assessment questionnaire is helpful in identifying client barriers (see pages 4-8 for details).
- The use of a social worker who can assist clients with specialized needs and aid in developing a plan of care specific to their needs with the involvement of a support team. The county is encouraged to submit this strategy to the CalWORKs Best Practices website (see pages 6-10 for details).
- Specialized needs units to handle cases with mental health, substance abuse, domestic abuse, learning disabilities, and New Americans. Other specialized

units include engagement, Fast-Track, and work experience (WEX) (see pages 4 and 6-9 for details).

- Onsite specialists (e.g., for substance abuse, mental health) available to assist clients immediately with needed services (see pages 6-8 for details).

### **Opportunities for Improvement**

Some of the areas noted as challenges during the CPR include the following:

- The county may want to consider all staff training on referral procedures to minimize variation of the referral process (see pages 6-10 for details).
- The county may explore ways to shorten the timeframe from when a referral is made, when it is sorted, when an appropriate appointment is scheduled, and the issue is addressed (see pages 6-8 for details).

### **Client Focus Group** (see pages 12-14 for details)

Clients shared a variety of comments based on their experiences. Some of the notable feedback and comments include the following:

- Clients expressed that they understood more about the CalWORKs program once they began the job workshop.
- 13 of 17 clients within one focus group believed their WTW plan would lead to them getting a job.
- Clients felt job specialists explained things well, but clients want to know all resource options available to them.

### **Key Recommendations**

- The county may want to consider bringing back former clients of different cultural backgrounds to share their successes and experience within the CalWORKs program with current clients (see pages 8-10 for details).
- The county may want to consider tracking the outcomes of clients after receiving the various specialized services offered by the county (see pages 8-10 for details).
- The county is encouraged to evaluate the possibility of having social worker staff who focus on prevention and others who focus on client intervention (see pages 10-11 for details).

### **Acknowledgements**

CDSS thanks Fresno Human Services Agency WTW Program Specialist, Roselinda Torres for hosting the CPR. CDSS also thanks Tulare County Human Services Agency Resource Specialist, Roxanna Cruz, Tulare County Human Services Agency CalWORKs Program Specialist II, Tessa Houston, and Kern County Human Services Social Service Worker, David Armendarez, for serving on the CPR team as peer county reviewers.

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## **County Peer Review: Fresno County Visit Summary**

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### **Introduction**

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The County Peer Review (CPR) Program was created for county peers and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to perform on-site reviews of counties' Welfare-to-Work (WTW) programs to identify and share promising practices, opportunities for improvement, and strategies that could positively impact work participation rates (WPR). Fresno County volunteered to host a CPR in January 2010 to focus attention on areas they felt would be of interest to other service providers and benefit Fresno County's California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program.

### **Fresno County Department of Social Services**

The Fresno CalWORKs program is composed of separate classifications for Employment Services staff with services provided at the main office located at 4455/4449 E. Kings Canyon Road Fresno, CA 93702. Rural offices also exist throughout Fresno County providing various services to clients. The county's job specialists assist clients in receiving WTW Services. Staff is divided among multiple offices and are divided into different functions with some staff managing an ongoing "generic" caseload and others maintaining "specialized" caseloads. The specialization is based on activity placement, language needs, or other needs of clients. For the purposes of this visit summary, "workers" refers to a combination of job specialists with ongoing caseloads and those with specialized caseloads unless otherwise specified. "Staff" refers to a combination of workers and/or management unless otherwise specified.

Other services included the following programs:

- Special Needs Unit: Specialized caseloads involving clients currently in alcohol or drug treatment, either residential or outpatient or for clients currently receiving services through Fresno County Mental Health Program.
- Cal Learn Unit: Works with teens and parents to get youth engaged and enrolled in back into school.
- Independent Living Skills Unit: work with transition age youth exiting the foster care system or juvenile probation process and assist them in developing employment skills, employment readiness and ultimately employment.
- Linkages Unit: Work with clients who are being served by Child Welfare Services (CWS) and CalWORKs.

At the time of the CPR, the CalWORKs WTW flow begins with the pre-assessment process that consisted of Orientation/Appraisal followed by the assessment phase. Once a client completes assessment and depending on their specific situation, they are placed into the county's job workshop, Jobs First/Jobs 2000, or placed directly into a WTW activity. If a client does not obtain employment within four weeks of job search, a reappraisal occurs with the client to determine additional WTW activities that could provide the client with the ultimate goal of obtaining employment. Within the county, orientation and assessment is a one-day eight hour process. Orientation is done as a

group, and assessments are conducted one-on-one, and include testing, briefing on mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence etc., and development of the WTW plan by end of day. The main offices have substance abuse specialists and mental health specialists present in orientation. The orientation information is also covered in rural offices. The Self-Assessment Functioning Evaluation (SAFE) form is used as a screening tool and is completed by the client. It consists of specific questions that may indicate the presence of barriers related to substance abuse, domestic abuse, and mental health, and is used in conjunction with client background information (e.g., education level, employment history, criminal record, etc.). Workers typically use the completed form at the time of assessment for an in-depth discussion with the client that may lead to identification of barriers and referrals for appropriate services.

### **Site Visit General Information**

The CPR was performed in Fresno County from January 11 to 13, 2010, and consisted of three days at the Fresno County Department of Social Services office. The CPR team included an analyst and supervisor from Tulare County, an analyst from Kern County, and CDSS staff. The CPR activities consisted of a kick-off meeting, close-out meeting, staff interviews, and case management observations (CMOs) with county staff.

Interviews were completed with various CalWORKs WTW staff. A total of eight CMOs were completed by the CPR team with job specialists and 12 interviews with staff (including five job specialists, five social services program supervisors, one social worker supervisor, and one program manager). The client focus groups were conducted with a total of 41 clients from job workshop classes in order to obtain a sample of clients' feedback on their CalWORKs experiences.

These CPR team debriefings were opportunities for trends, practices, and general observations noted during the days' activities to be discussed in preparation for the close-out meeting and the development of this visit summary.

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### **Scope**

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The scope was identified by Fresno County management to focus attention on areas they felt would benefit their CalWORKs program. The scope was based on Fresno County discussions with CDSS and information gathered from a self-assessment tool completed by the county. The scope of the review covered the following areas:

- Referral process for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
- Review of the county's ability in identifying barriers upfront
- Identifying ways of improving Work Participation Rate

Each focus area is discussed below with observations obtained by the CPR team from interviews and case discussions with Fresno county staff. General observations not related to the focus areas, but are significant and unique, are also discussed below. Each set of observations is followed by recommendations from the CPR team.

## **Focus Area 1: Referrals for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services**

### **Observations:**

At the time of the CPR, the county's assessment tool (SAFE ES 28/28A form) was used to identify barriers and make referrals. Many workers noted that it is most useful when the client is truthful and comfortable with disclosing issues to their worker. The county uses the assessment tool results to discuss barriers that were identified by the client. Workers consider it a challenge to gain clients' trust enough for them to admit their barriers. Workers also rely on observations and dialogue during conversations with the client in order to get a general feel of the client's overall situation. Not showing up for a scheduled appointment or activity (i.e., "no shows") can be an indicator of a potential issue with the client's situation. Persistence among workers as they interact with clients is viewed as key to open dialogue and positive outcome with clients. For example, sometimes workers will make a referral several times before the client is open to the opportunity to address barriers related to mental health, substance abuse, or domestic abuse. It is also common for the job specialists to make referrals when they become aware of client barriers.

At the time of the CPR, the referral process consisted of a generic worker or assessor utilizing the assessment tool, and based on the outcome with the client, the worker may then make a referral using an ES103 Social Work or Substance Abuse Referral form which is sent to a centralized email inbox to process. A clerical worker will check the incoming ES103's via the county's Department of Social Services (DSS)/Social Worker (SW) Mailbox and print the ES103's. The ES103's are triaged the next working day by the Refer –Services, Employ – Opportunities, Assess-Help, Challenge-Future, and Heal-Independence (REACH) Intervention/Prevention Team. The Team will review the referral and assign to the appropriate REACH Team member. The assigned REACH Team member will screen, evaluate, identify the client needs to link to the appropriate service. The REACH Team clerical staff will email the referring job specialist (JS)/eligibility worker (EW) a notification of the REACH Team worker assigned to the client. The referring worker will receive a notification that the client's case will be requested by the special needs job specialist when the client begins treatment. Although the specialized needs unit has fewer cases than regular workers and therefore more time to focus on clients individually, the unit believes more time is needed to allow for the intensive services required by these cases.

At the client's first appointment with the social worker, a plan of care is developed. A support team consisting of the community mental health specialist, a job specialist, and the supervising clinician is organized. The goal of the support team is to help support the client throughout their six month mental health program. Some workers felt that this strategy has a high rate of success and that the majority of clients are employable and are getting employed once stable. Building a relationship with the client is viewed as a key to identifying barriers. The county has a focus group program that is conducted with clients once a month and clients say they like the support and the opportunity to make friends that the program offers.

The mental health track of Pathways of Recovery consists of 15 hours per week for the client and lasts six months through Department of Mental Health. It consists of three hour classes where clients gain tools, information, and medication, if needed, on how to manage their issues at work or school. The county contracts with the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) for this program, and it includes county licensed therapists and a private contracted board certified addictionologist. Part of the program also entails employment opportunities including field trips to job sites and temporary employment agencies. The focus is on evidence-based mental health supported employment accommodations and skill development for the clients. Clients in months 4-6 of the program travel to various employers sites to view the workplace and obtain information on employment opportunities. The clients are transported by DBH staff and assisted on-site by the county's assigned Job Developer. It is expected that clients will apply for jobs at these sites or use this experience to further their options for obtaining employment.

Workers in the specialized needs unit become experts in their area and are successful. Some specialized units include Engagement, Fast-Track, and work experience (WEX) units. Benefits of smaller specialized caseloads include the ability to give more time to clients, to get them the services they need, and prevents clients from falling in the cracks (and not focusing solely on WPR). Some workers said that cases do not always get transferred back to the ongoing worker at the end of six month mental health program because there is not enough time and it is not as much of a priority. Workers would like to transfer cases back once to the ongoing caseload once the specialized services are completed but it is time-consuming to do so and takes a lot of preparation before a case can be passed to another worker.

In regard to referrals, most are made for mental health and domestic abuse issues, and are sometimes coupled with substance abuse. Clients with drug problems frequently don't want to admit their barrier, so some workers feel the referral process is effective in alerting the social worker of barriers. Others stated that the referral process is a little inconsistent – sometimes the referral is made to a centralized inbox and sometimes a packet is routed internally. It typically takes five days to get feedback after a packet is routed. Evaluation for learning disabilities is provided by Fresno State using a screening tool. Sometimes it is an issue when a client's prescription for a mental health condition expires and they need a new referral to get their medications. Supportive Employment Educational Services (SEES) is a program and unit for clients with severe mental health issues. Metro is a program used when more intensive mental services are needed, sometimes after completion of the six month program. Many workers felt that the mental health programs provided externally are the best support for clients with these barriers.

Workers expressed that so much need exists among clients that it is hard for workers to help all non-immediate need referrals, particularly with caseloads up to 100 per worker. Some workers mentioned that they try to connect their clients to the appropriate people and services they need, but mentioned it is a challenge to do enough home calls. Several staff also noted an increase in domestic violence among male victims.

Overall, supervisors believe the referral process is effective, but could be better if there were more social workers and if clients would commit to completing the services provided to them. Client successes evolve around finishing their treatment program and removing their barriers that prevent them from succeeding in the WTW program. For example, a client getting out of a domestic abuse situation is critical to the overall success of the client within the WTW program. During the time of the CPR, the county was in a holding pattern for mental health referrals due to a social worker's recent retirement; however, an interim process was instituted. The county has since implemented a new process which allows for a daily staffing of all referrals by a team comprised of a social worker, a licensed mental health clinician, and a substance abuse specialist.

The timeframe for contact following a referral varies from immediate, three weeks, or a month. Workers felt it can take a long time for supervisors to determine which caseload each case should be assigned to, which results in delays and inconsistencies. Having a substance abuse specialist onsite is very helpful, allowing the ongoing worker to ask the specialist questions or recommendations, and for the client to be connected directly and immediately to their services. The county has up to six workers available onsite, and can get to other sites within 30-60 minutes if necessary.

The county has a contract through the California State University of Fresno (CSU Fresno) to work with clients with low academic scores, English as a Second Language (ESL), learning disabilities screening and evaluation. For monolingual clients, such as the New American population, ESL is particularly helpful. The social worker filters these referrals to the appropriate specialist. The engagement unit contacts those who are not in an activity, those who are not participating, and those who are sanctioned. A clerical worker will sort email and schedule referred clients with the appropriate staff, usually the social worker or another specialist. Staff receives statistics from the office assistant monthly on referrals related to the SAFE forms.

#### Recommendations:

- Some job specialists would like more training in handling situations such as mental health.
- Offer all staff training on referral procedures to minimize variation of process. Since the visit, the county has improved upon their referral process by creating the Refer –Services, Employ – Opportunities, Assess-Help, Challenge-Future, and Heal-Independence (REACH) Intervention/Prevention Team. This team is made up of the following staff: CalWORKs Social Worker, Mental Health Clinician, Senior Substance Abuse Specialist, Community Mental Health Specialist and Substance Abuse Specialists. The goal of the team is to assess the participant for linkage to appropriate services to resolve barriers for both participant and their child(ren). As part of the county's improved process, each morning the REACH team meets to triage all referrals received the day before and assess, prioritize and assign the referrals. There is also an assigned "Interviewer" of the day person who is able to assist line staff with emergencies.



- Workers would like more staff to lower caseloads, including supervisors to aid with referrals, more social workers to assist clients, and more flexibility with using certain activities for core hours.
- When receiving referrals, child care staff would like the family's information to be included in addition to the individual's information, because they need to know what the second parent's situation is in a two-parent family.

## **Focus Area 2: Ability to identify barriers upfront**

### **Observations:**

Many workers felt that the county's overall ability to determine clients' needs is excellent, but meeting those needs is a challenge. Many workers felt the SAFE form used at the time of assessment is a useful tool for identifying client barriers, especially in combination with observation and discussions with the client. The county also maintains a contract with CSU Fresno for clients who are monolingual, may need screening for learning disabilities, low academic scores, etc. Some workers felt the SAFE form is a good basis for assessment and WTW plan development. Some workers would like more time with clients to build trust and rapport and identify barriers. Workers try to provide the client with the support they need as part of their WTW plan to ensure their success (e.g., mental health hours included in the plan). Barriers are identified using: orientation process, the SAFE form, the centralized email inbox, through the job specialists' rapport with clients, behavior patterns, daily observation of interaction, conversations, relationship building, asking questions in a different way, not showing up for an appointment, work history, demeanor, etc. Several workers noted that the SAFE form is most useful when the client is truthful in their answers. Referrals are received in a centralized email box; immediate need referrals are walked directly over to the appropriate specialist, social worker or other onsite services provided. Oftentimes barriers will not be caught until later, but not due to poor screening. Issues tend to arise over time and through observing patterns of behavior, drug testing, not showing up for activities, etc., which may not be discovered for some time.

Separation of spouses is a technique that helps give opportunity for barriers to be disclosed. The county uses a process to ensure that the two parents are enrolled in separate classes or orientations that are scheduled by Office Assistants.

Workers find that identification of barriers depends on clients being comfortable enough to disclose their personal issues and oftentimes things will come up later down the road once trust has been established. Workers also mentioned that it usually depends on the client's level of motivation and mindset. Workers often have to offer things multiple times before the client will be open to it, so persistence is critical. Sometimes workers keep explaining things to clients, and eventually the client may begin to understand how program can help them and take advantage of the services offered to them.

The New Americans unit focuses on providing employment services in a culturally sensitive manner with strategies designed to meet the unique needs of this population, many of which are monolingual. To provide specialized services, the county partners

with community based organizations such as the Fresno Center for New Americans, Khmer Society, Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries and Lao Family Community. Some clients are unable to comprehend or understand the benefits of the WTW program due to cultural or language barriers. Communication tends to be easier when clients of other ethnicities have gone through the U.S. education system. Workers felt that cultural training is helpful but is not sufficient to break through cultural communication barriers. To aid in connecting this population with the services they need, the New Americans unit could be expanded.

Some clients in the job workshop have not attended an orientation, or there is a gap between when aid is granted and before they go to orientation, which means time lost and no services provided. Workers try to help clients to become healthy mentally first before pushing them into activities, depending on the particular issues.

Workers build relationships and relate to clients by sharing personal experiences. Workers would like more one-on-one time to build rapport and follow up with clients. Staff mentioned that they use their coworkers as resources to gain techniques and ideas for connecting with clients. Workers would like to remove the stigma of the WTW program, or having a mental health, substance abuse, or domestic abuse issue, so that clients feel more open discussing their concerns without judgment. Workers will also check in on the second parent even when they are talking with the first parent.

#### Recommendations:

- Resolving short-term issues allows clients to be more successful with long term goals.
- Workers would like more social workers available as they serve a critical role by developing the plan of care and support team.
- Suggestion – explain how the SAFE form can help them get connected with services that will help with their issues.
- One consistent challenge noted was getting clients' trust and getting them to admit barriers. The county may want to consider bringing back successful clients of different cultural backgrounds to share their successes and experience within the CalWORKs program with current clients. For example, clients who can relate and connect with others who have been through the process and have similar backgrounds and cultural connections may express themselves more openly regarding barriers and personal needs.
- Suggestion – track the client outcomes after receiving specialized services, to follow through with the client to the next step.

### **Focus Area 3: Improving county work participation rate (WPR)**

#### Observations:

Through the county's Jobs First and Jobs 2000 programs, a legal advisor is available to work with clients that have legal issues. The legal advisor also provides community service assistance to clear traffic tickets and get them resolved. Some workers noted that they would like more services for the hard to serve, especially those with criminal

backgrounds or learning disabilities. The Employment Services Program (ESP) focuses on clients receiving mental health services and consists of three stages: the first stage begins with coordinating the needs of the client, the second stage focuses on training and preparing the client to be successful in the WTW program, the third stage consists of assigning the client to an activity (e.g., mock interviews).

External partners within the business community vary, and include Margery Mason Domestic Violence Center, Child Protective Services (CPS) – Linkages, Sanctuary for Homeless High Risk Teens, and Spirit of Women. Some workers are concerned that clients will not receive needed medication, possibly due to Medi-Cal cuts, once the client completes their mental health services and the client is transferred back to their WTW worker. Overall workers agree that the best support system for clients is their own family and friends.

At the time of the CPR, the Kerman office had gone from a 20 percent WPR to a 75 percent WPR, with a two-parent WPR of 99 percent. The county also utilizes “show/no show” lists and uses other reports to see if activities are being updated to ensure that the noncompliance process is followed through.

#### Worker Feedback on Program Enhancement

During the CPR, workers provided informative feedback regarding potential improvements ideas they felt would benefit the county’s WTW program. Workers expressed a variety of constructive feedback which has been characterized into categories relating to staff resources, county CalWORKs services and staff performance strategies. For example, with staff resources being one of the underlying themes of worker responses, adding staff for substance abuse and mental health workers would benefit clients with specialized needs and improve their overall success within the WTW program. Several workers mentioned they would like more social workers to help with client crisis situations within the county and ideally substance abuse and social workers at each county facility. Workers expressed a desire to receive more training on how to deal with violent client situations, and also training to be more culturally and ethnically sensitive to backgrounds of various clients. Workers expressed a concern regarding turnaround time for security assistance and what security procedures to follow. For example, some workers indicated they were unfamiliar with who to call for security should a violent client situation occur.

#### Client Services

During the time of the CPR, workers and clients both expressed positive feelings about the benefits of the county’s 80/20 subsidized employment program (80/20 was the county’s temporary TANF Emergency Contingency Fund subsidized employment program). Workers mentioned they would like 80/20 subsidized employment program to continue and felt that it motivates clients and employers. Workers stated providing services for hard to place clients, such as those with criminal backgrounds, felonies and learning disabilities, to name a few, would contribute to client success. Some workers stated that referrals should be made right away when they need it, as some clients live in a daily crisis and require immediate attention for issues that cannot wait 30 days for a

referral for an appointment. The most effective time to act is when the client admits to the problem or barriers, not weeks later. It is best for clients when social workers intervene in the earliest stage possible. To improve upon referrals and turnaround time on client intervention, some workers suggested establishing timelines to engage clients on mental health and substance abuse thus establishing goals and possibly tracking system to help staff manage client interaction and case flow.

In addition, another improvement that could be made is to establish quicker response times from Pathways to Recovery, which includes mental health services. Workers would like social workers to work more on prevention and outreach so there would be less need for intervention, e.g., look at zip code areas with the highest levels of violence to utilize the services that the county has for that area or develop new client services based on demographic need. Drug testing is a useful way to identify a substance abuse barrier and make referrals to appropriate services. Spanish language orientations would be helpful to clients who speak English as a second language. For rural areas, more transportation from outlying areas to Fresno would contribute to improving client transportation options. Workers would also like to see more jobs in rural areas since agriculture may be declining and clients are eager to find alternate jobs.

#### Recommendations:

- A family to family program to link clients with no support systems with families that have gone through the program before that they can relate to and better understand how the program can help them. This might also benefit New Americans and domestic abuse victims.
- The county could consider expanding WEX placements, particularly with Goodwill. WEX placements in Goodwill tend to be in a more controlled environment with smaller groups of employees. Goodwill also tends to have good instructors who are willing to accept clients with low scores. Limited slots for WEX placement may continue to be an issue.
- The county may want to evaluate the possibility of having social worker staff focusing on prevention and others focusing on client intervention. In addition, the county may explore expanding the social worker staff based on overall needs via justification evaluation by county management. See previous comments above regarding REACH Team.

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### **Focus Group**

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The client focus groups were conducted by the CPR team which included peer county staff from Fresno County, Tulare County and CDSS staff. The client focus group portion of the Fresno CPR was held on January 13, 2010 with 41 clients. The client focus groups were performed during regular sessions of the Jobs First/Jobs 2000 class. Based on questions presented to the clients, the clients were able to share helpful comments related to the focus areas based on their experiences and about the county's WTW program.

### Most and least helpful to client success

Clients stated a variety of opinions on CalWORKs services they felt were most helpful to their success, along with general comments regarding least helpful activities. In one focus group, all 17 clients indicated that Job Search gave them confidence that things could change for the better. These clients also expressed their admiration for Jobs 2000, although some clients felt that five weeks of Jobs 2000 was too long. Most clients mentioned there are more positive things than negative about Jobs 2000 and its benefits. Some clients mentioned they understood more about the CalWORKs program once they got to Jobs 2000; however, some clients felt they had to ask their worker to be placed into a Jobs 2000 class. Although clients felt that Jobs 2000 was mostly helpful, some felt it interfered with scheduled interviewing for the 80/20 subsidized employment program which clients also liked. In addition, clients expressed that they liked the Shields activity as part of Jobs 2000. The Shields activity involves clients drawing a shield, dividing it up into four sections and identifying three past jobs; three positive things that describe them/their personality/their family; three hobbies and three accomplishments. They then present their shields to the class and field questions from their peers. Clients stated that they would like more training programs, particularly on the job training opportunities. Clients found that it was helpful to have references from their Jobs 2000 experience.

Some clients felt the threat of sanctions was the least helpful motivator and that some workers did not take the client's situation into consideration. Clients expressed the need for some leniency when they have a reason for not participating. In addition, some clients mentioned that the WEX activity offered to them through the county was not helpful and felt they were working for free since it did not always result in a full time job. Several clients stated that getting child care supportive services takes four to eight weeks. Thirteen clients out of 24 said that the bus passes provided by the county are very useful and convenient. One client explained that many clients do not have cars to attend Jobs 2000, and that it would be helpful to have a volunteer transportation service. Some clients stated they would like more information on grants and loans to be provided. Many clients thought it was beneficial that the county provided assistance with clothing for interviews.

### Understanding CalWORKs Services and WTW Plan

Clients indicated they understand what is available to them in terms of CalWORKs services and support, but that information on supportive services should be provided sooner. However, some clients felt that the total options of services are not covered. Some clients said they are just told what they are going to do and where they need to go for services. Of the 17 clients within one of the focus groups, 13 felt their WTW plan would lead them to getting a job and were grateful for the WTW program. Some clients were also exempt volunteers that were opting to participate in Jobs 2000.

### Orientation and Appraisal (O/A)

Clients' feedback on Orientation and Appraisal varied: approximately half of the clients within one focus group described O/A as boring and thought it had too much paperwork

and testing while the other half found it helpful. Some clients felt they learned how the CalWORKs program works, but not how it benefits them. Eleven clients completed the job search portion. Some clients could not perform job search because they would need a driver's license. Some clients felt that it took too long to be contacted after receiving their cash grant and before attending an orientation (up to six weeks) and didn't know what their options were.

#### Client Recommendation- WTW program

Clients openly expressed recommendations they felt could enhance areas of the WTW program resulting in potential improvement to client success within the WTW program. For example, some felt there is no time to do job searching during the Jobs 2000 class which is from 8:00 am – 4:30 pm, and more job searching opportunities within the class would be ideal since it takes up the full day. Additional recommendation from clients included increased on-the-job training opportunities and expanding more temporary agencies opportunities thus leading to more work options for the client. One client said it was helpful to get their juvenile records sealed. Clients also mentioned increasing the efficiency of quality control measures performed to better handle fraud situations without impacting those who comply. Some clients mentioned they would like earlier notice about when they are approaching the 60-month time on aid limit.

#### Job Specialist

Eight clients mentioned that their job specialists explained the benefits well and help them develop goals. Many clients felt that most job specialists try to help to the best of their abilities and also try to address client barriers right away. Some clients stated when meeting with their job specialist, they want to know all service options available to them. Regarding the frequency of contact with their job specialists, in the focus group of 24 clients, none indicated that they had daily or weekly contact, four stated once a month, and one client did not know who their job specialist was. Some clients mentioned a lack of return phone calls from their job specialists and that they have to call the supervisor; others mentioned that their job specialists are good with communication. Some clients felt dissatisfied due to switching job specialists frequently. Some felt there were too many different workers making it difficult to develop a working relationship. One client described their worker as being "on top of it all".

#### **Acknowledgements**

CDSS thanks Fresno Department of Social Services WTW Program Specialist Roselinda Torres for hosting the CPR. CDSS also thanks Roxanna Cruz, Tulare County Human Services Agency Resource Specialist, Tessa Houston, Tulare County Human Services Agency Program Specialist II, and David Armendarez, Kern County Human Services Social Service Worker, for serving on the CPR team as peer county reviewers.