

**Senate Bill 1041 Implementation
CalWORKs County Review Session Summary**

Del Norte

March 1, 2016

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Welfare to Work Division
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Del Norte County
Senate Bill 1041 Implementation
CalWORKs County Review Session Summary

Introduction

Purpose of County Review Session

The purpose of the Senate Bill (SB) 1041 Implementation County Review Session is to obtain information regarding the county's ongoing progress in implementing program changes enacted by SB 1041 (Chapter 47, Statutes of 2012). In addition to benefits and challenges associated with SB 1041, Assembly Bill (AB) 74 (Chapter 21, Statutes of 2013) required the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to develop and implement an appraisal tool to be used by all County Welfare Departments (CWD) to assess clients' strengths and barriers. This new in-depth Online CalWORKs Appraisal Tool (OCAT) plays an integral role in identifying client service needs.

Scope of County Review Session

Specifically, the CDSS will determine how each CWD implemented SB 1041 program changes and AB 74 processes, including but not limited to:

- Welfare-to-Work (WTW) participation requirements;
- Post WTW 24-Month Time Clock services;
- Training methods provided to staff in order to implement SB 1041 changes;
- Data outcomes related to SB 1041 program changes;
- Family Stabilization Program;
- Expanded Subsidized Employment Program (ESE); and
- Implementation of the OCAT.

Goals of County Review Session

The CDSS's goals of the County Review Session are to ensure that SB 1041 was implemented correctly by each CWD, to gather and share promising practices in regards to implementation among all CWDs throughout the state, and to determine whether systematic or program issues relating to the integration of SB 1041 changes into the existing California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) and WTW program exist throughout the state. The CDSS will also assess the CWD implementation processes associated with the OCAT as a result of AB 74. If any issues exist, they will be addressed by the CalWORKs Program Oversight Workgroup.

County Review Session General Information

The County Review Session was held on Tuesday, March 1, 2016, via a teleconference call. The county review team included five staff from the CDSS, WTW Division's CalWORKs Employment and Child Care Bureaus and five staff from Del Norte County's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), including the Program Manager for Public Assistance. At the time of the County Review Session, Del Norte County had three casework vacancies—one in

Employment and Training and two in Eligibility—which the county was engaged in filling. Del Norte County DHHS has also recently filled its assistant director’s position.

Del Norte County has Integrated Caseworkers (ICWs) who handle eligibility for multiple social service programs (including CalWORKs, CalFresh, and Medi-Cal) and Employment and Training Workers (ETWs) for WTW services. Some ETWs carry specialized caseloads, such as Cal-Learn, Family Stabilization, and Linkages. Linkages programs coordinate services for families with both child welfare and CalWORKs casework components.

Del Norte County DHHS offers voluntary participation in orientation at intake, which provides an opportunity for individuals to become engaged early. After clients are determined to be eligible for CalWORKs cash assistance—and following orientation if a client did not attend at intake—appraisal appointments are set within two to three weeks depending on clients’ availability and the number of new cases at that time. Child care is available during appraisal appointments, which helps to reinforce the message about child care supportive services. Del Norte County strives to make orientations conversational and relaxed so that clients are able to assimilate information, such as the availability of supportive services, and not become overwhelmed with details.

Del Norte County DHHS has two offices: 880 Northcrest Drive and 286 M Street, which are both in Crescent City and less than a mile apart. The Northcrest office provides Eligibility services and the M Street office provides Employment and Training services. The Employment and Training office is co-located with the county’s Del Norte County Workforce Center, which provides Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) services. Co-location of workforce and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) services meets a critical requirement of WIOA. Del Norte County began this effective co-location strategy years before WIOA became effective in 2015. Additional services are located at the county office at 455 K Street, which is near both the Northcrest and M Street offices.

Other services at the Northcrest office:

- CalFresh (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)
- In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)
- Medi-Cal
- Child Welfare Services (Emergency Response and Linkages)

Services at the K Street office:

- Mental Health
- California Children's Services Program
- Maternal Child Adolescent Health
- Nurse-Family Partnership
- Public Guardian/Public Conservator
- Public Health Nursing
- Strengthening Families Program
- Tobacco Use Prevention Program

Demographic Area and Economy

The population of Del Norte County as of the 2010 census was 28,610. Crescent City is the only incorporated city in the county, and it is also the county seat (population: 7,643). The majority of CalWORKs clients live in and near Crescent City. The economy in Del Norte County continues to recover from the Great Recession, and the county is working on implementing an ESE program to aid with transitioning clients into work. The California Tribal TANF Partnership operates a Tribal TANF program in Del Norte County and 14 other counties in coordination with 20 different tribes.

The primary source of jobs in Del Norte County is government employment, with the county and Pelican Bay State Prison being the largest employers. Other significant employers include the hospitality and retail industries. Most retail jobs are part-time and do not provide benefits. Del Norte County also has a fishing industry operating primarily out of the Crescent City Harbor, which provides nearly half of all the Dungeness crab sold in California. In 2011, the harbor was damaged by the tsunami that originated in Sendai, Japan.

One of Del Norte County's challenges is the lack of affordable housing. There is one housing shelter in Del Norte County, which is for individuals dealing with domestic violence. This shelter primarily serves women and children, and residency is limited to a maximum of 18 days. There are vacant residences in the Crescent City area, but some landlords are unwilling to rent to CalWORKs clients due to negative experiences in the past. Del Norte County DHHS applied for the CalWORKs Housing Support Program in 2014, but was not selected to receive funds. The county did not apply for funds in 2015. The county will apply again for funding in 2016 if funding remains available and new applications are accepted.

Public transportation is also limited and buses stop at 7:30 p.m., well before some college classes and many service jobs end. Fortunately, transportation is not a major issue for remote areas because Del Norte County does not have a large number of remotely located clients, since most affordable housing is in Crescent City. There is no social services advocate community in Del Norte County, and the nearest legal aid for recipients of public assistance is Redwood Legal Services, which is located in Eureka in Humboldt County.

SB 1041 Implementation Strategies

All casework staff was trained regarding SB 1041 changes, including re-engagement and WTW 24-Month Time Clock rules. For training, the county used All County Letter (ACLs) as well as other guidance from the CDSS and training materials the county developed itself. The county also participated in workgroups such as the CalWORKs Policy Committee, which provided peer insights to aid training efforts. County staff also attended workshops on SB 1041 changes and early engagement at the CalWORKs Training Academy in 2013 and the CalWORKs and Refugee Programs Training Academy in 2015.

Comprehensive discussions with ongoing clients to implement SB 1041 changes went smoothly. Clients with less than 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit had their comprehensive discussions first. The re-engagement process was also smooth and efficient, as

a number of clients in short-term exemptions were already engaged voluntarily, primarily in education activities. Del Norte County DHHS did not experience significant changes in WTW plans or participation following the implementation of the WTW 24-Month Time Clock because the county has a long-standing policy of being flexible with developing plans based on removing barriers and building skills to help the clients reach self-sufficiency.

Del Norte County DHHS fosters an environment to support clients who are partially participating (i.e., clients who are participating in an activity or activities that may not be meeting all required weekly hours). The DHHS recognizes that there are things out of the clients control such as fluctuating job hours or breaks in school activities. The DHHS believes that a client who is partially participating has a better chance of becoming a fully participating client with support from their ETWs than a client who is facing a grant cut due to non-compliance.

Del Norte County recognizes that ongoing staff training is key to caseworkers successfully assisting clients with the complexities of SB 1041 and the WTW 24-Month Time Clock and to ensure that clients are receiving the services they need to succeed and meet program requirements. The county provides ongoing training on SB 1041 policies, AB 74 early engagement programs, other directives, and new policies to ensure staff has current the information to serve clients.

Some of Del Norte County’s Key Successes include:

- Del Norte County has strong relationships with its partners, including the College of the Redwoods and the Del Norte County Child Care Council (DNCCC). The DNCCC is the county’s Resource and Referral program as well as its Alternative Payment Program for clients needing child care supportive services.
- Del Norte County makes strong use of its relatively small staff and centrally located operations to quickly disseminate information; for example, if a new ACL is released, the supervisor for ETWs can quickly gather staff to communicate guidance.
- WTW employment services are co-located at the Del Norte Workforce Center, which is the county’s One-Stop Career Center (aka “American Job Center of California,” following the implementation of WIOA).
- Del Norte County makes the CalWORKs orientation available to clients on a voluntary basis at the time of intake, which allows the county to provide key information about employment services and program flow as early as possible.
- Del Norte County utilizes the county’s Small Business Development Center for self-employed clients to ensure the clients have adequate and reliable information related to self-employment; at the time of the County Review Session, the county had 20 clients participating in self-employment.

Acknowledgement

The CDSS thanks the Del Norte County DHHS for working with the CDSS in the scheduling of the teleconference session. The CDSS appreciates the open collaboration with CWD staff to ensure the continued success of the CalWORKs program.

Background and Data

Del Norte at-a-glance

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|--|------------|
| Total Caseload..... | 699 |
| (Source: CalWORKs Cash Grant Caseload Movement Report [CA 237 CW] Line Item 8a-January 2016) | |
| WTW Enrollees..... | 518 |
| (Source: CalWORKs WTW Monthly Activity Report [WTW 25/25A] Line Item 1-January 2016) | |
| Mandatory Participants (enrollees + sanctioned + non-compliance)..... | 578 |
| (Source: CalWORKs WTW Monthly Activity Report [WTW 25/25A] Line Item 1, 3A, and 31-January 2016) | |
| Reengagement Plan Received..... | Yes |
| Beginning Date of Reengagement..... | April 2013 |
| Consortium System..... | C-IV |

Data/Statistics Available at Time of County Review Session:

- Clients who had more than 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit as of January 1, 2013, who have had their comprehensive discussion: **All**
- Clients who had less than or equal to 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit as of January 1, 2013, who have had their comprehensive discussion: **All**
- Sanctions that were cured as a result of SB 1041: **0**
- Former short-term young child exempt clients (Assembly Bill [AB] X4 4) who have been reengaged: **All**
- WTW plans that have changed as a result of SB 1041 implementation: **0**
- Clients who have used the new once in a lifetime young child exemption: **124**

Summary of documents obtained from Del Norte County for the teleconference session:

- County appointment letters for comprehensive discussions of the SB 1041 changes which could be customized based on the status of the recipients.
- County letter notifying eligible clients about the 0-23 month child exemption.
- Action Plan job aid to help ETWs create a plan for each case to ensure all steps are completed for the SB 1041 requirements.

County Administrator and Caseworker Dialogue

The CDSS County Review Team used updated county administrator and caseworker interview tools following those released in All County Information Notice I-42-13 regarding SB 1041 implementation. The updated tools were provided to Del Norte County DHHS in advance of the County Review Session teleconference call.

WTW 24-Month Time Clock Implementation and New WTW Participation Requirements

Transitioning Clients

As SB 1041 changes were implemented in 2013, all clients have been transitioned to the

WTW 24-Month Time Clock and have received comprehensive discussions for all of the changes and opportunities under SB 1041. Del Norte County DHHS had a smooth transition to the WTW 24-Month Time Clock work plans because their approach to client service has long been flexibility in WTW activities so that clients can remove barriers and develop skills to become self-sufficient.

The biggest challenge of SB 1041 has been to educate clients about the WTW 24-Month Time Clock due to the complexity of this policy. Although this policy has been in place for three years, it is still difficult for clients to grasp. Del Norte County DHHS staff on the session call explained that while they support the flexibility of activities under the WTW 24-Month Time Clock, they also recommend the repeal of this policy because it is structured in such a complicated way that it hinders rather than helps ETWs' ability to provide clients with the services they need to succeed.

At the time of the County Review Session, Del Norte County was in the midst of updating the number of clients who had used up all of the months on their WTW 24-Month Time Clocks. The county employs a thorough auditing process to ensure that clients' months have been counted accurately. In addition to tracking the months through their consortium (C-IV), ETWs track clients' months in the WTW 24-Month Time Clock using Excel spreadsheets to help increase the accuracy of tracking this complicated clock. This is to ensure that the most accurate and current data on the WTW 24-Month Time Clock is available to ETWs. When the county verifies that clients have used up their WTW 24-Month Time Clocks, ETWs work with these clients to help them successfully participate under the more stringent federal participation guidelines so the clients can continue to move forward in their activities and not become sanctioned.

Clients who failed to attend SB 1041 appointments

Del Norte County DHHS had no significant problems with clients attending the SB 1041 appointments including comprehensive discussions and re-engagement.

New Young Child Exemption

One hundred-twenty-four clients have opted to make use of this exemption as of the time of the County Review Session. The great majority of eligible clients are opting to take this exemption and the county is accommodating families by allowing them to switch the exemption one time from one parent to the other in two-parent households as needed to support their participation in WTW.

Post WTW 24-Month Time Clock

Del Norte County DHHS does not have a 20 percent target for WTW 24-Month Time Clock extensions at this time. The county is staying current on guidance from the state and case information to be ready to provide extensions to any clients who use up their WTW 24-Month Time Clocks and who may need an extension due to factors such as barriers, a weak job market, nearing completion of an education program, or other factors that may qualify for an extension.

Family Stabilization

Family Stabilization has allowed the county to identify and work with families more directly to resolve barriers. Referrals are generated by ETWs after appraisal and other discussions with the clients. Del Norte County's referral team reviews the immediate needs and assesses the case for potential participation in Family Stabilization. Upon referral to Family Stabilization, two ETWs provide intensive case management for the families. Del Norte County's Family Stabilization focuses primarily on housing support assistance.

Del Norte County DHHS staff explained that clients are very appreciative of the housing assistance. The biggest challenge facing the county in its Family Stabilization efforts has been finding sufficient suitable and affordable housing options. Del Norte County has determined that one key to success for housing placements is training staff to establish relationships with landlords to assist with housing issues as they come up. Del Norte County DHHS management recognizes that intensive case management requires specialized skills and is committed to ongoing training to continually refine services for Family Stabilization clients.

Expanded Subsidized Employment (ESE)

The ESE Program was implemented as a result of the passage of AB 74 and is one part of the CDSS WTW Early Engagement Strategies (the others being Family Stabilization and the OCAT). Del Norte County DHHS is currently in the process of implementing an ESE program and has recently submitted its ESE plan to the CDSS. Del Norte County has a staff member who works with youth for internships and will also perform job development for ESE. The county will hold its semi-annual "Job Social" (job fair) in the spring of 2016, and at the time of the County Review Session had 28 employers signed up to participate. Del Norte County DHHS is gearing up for the launch of the ESE program with trainings for ETWs and associated staff.

OCAT Implementation

At the time of the County Review Session, Del Norte County DHHS was in the process of implementing the OCAT starting in May 2016. The DHHS had already completed the technical framework to begin using the tool and participated in additional staff training to ensure that the DHHS implemented the tool efficiently and effectively.

Child Care Services

At the time of the County Review Session, Del Norte County DHHS clients were receiving child care supportive services at a significantly higher rate than the state average, which the county attributes primarily to three factors:

- Del Norte County Child Care Council, the county's resource and referral program and alternative payment program, has a strong partnership with the county CalWORKs program and is located just two blocks away from the Employment and Training office, so it is easy for clients to access with other CalWORKs services.
- Clients are provided information regarding the availability of child care supportive services starting with orientation and continuing through appraisal and other meetings throughout clients' WTW participation; the message regarding the availability of child care supportive services is reinforced with clients over and over.

- Families needing child care in the Del Norte County CalWORKs program fluctuate, and at the time of the County Review Session, there were a higher number of families with younger children who need child care.

As in any county, there are sometimes challenges to providing child care. Sometimes there are not enough providers in Del Norte County, but this is not a regular, ongoing issue. Another challenge is that some clients are concerned about leaving their children with licensed child care providers they do not know. The county addresses this concern through case management—ETWs and Child Care Council staff work with clients to alleviate concerns.

Conclusion

Successes

- Del Norte County completed all requirements under SB 1041, including comprehensive discussions, reengagement, and implementation of the WTW 24-Month Time Clock.
 - Del Norte County met with all ongoing clients starting in 2013 for comprehensive discussions and reengagement.
 - Del Norte County continues to provide all of the information about SB 1041 requirements, including the flexibility of the WTW 24-Month Time Clock, hourly requirements, and the young child exemption to new clients.
 - Del Norte County continues to provide guidance and trainings for staff on SB 1041 and AB 74 to ensure that policies remain current and consistent.
- Del Norte County’s Workforce Center has co-located CalWORKs services and staff, which is a critical requirement of WIOA.
 - The county established this on-site partnership long before WIOA became effective on July 1, 2015.
 - This strategy may be a potential template for other counties that need to enhance or implement co-location as part of the WIOA-TANF partnership.
- One of Del Norte County DHHS’s strongest partnerships is the relationship with their local community college, College of the Redwoods, which has a satellite campus in Crescent City.
 - The main campus is located approximately 90 miles to the south in Eureka, which is in Humboldt County.
 - The satellite campus offers nearly all of the same courses and services as the main campus and has its own CalWORKs counselor.
 - The Employment and Training Unit supervisor meets formally with the CalWORKs counselor formally a few times a year; they meet informally far more often to maintain effective services for WTW clients attending the college.
 - At the time of the County Review Session, nearly 100 WTW participants were attending classes at the College of the Redwoods.
- Del Norte County’s clients are mostly centrally located in and near Crescent City and with the county’s offices located near each other along with the child care agency, it is easy for clients to access services.

Challenges

- Del Norte County had not implemented the OCAT at the time of the County Review Session.
- Del Norte is a small, mostly rural county with limited employment opportunities, which are primarily in government, retail, and hospitality.
- Affordable housing is scarce and the Housing Support Program is not currently available in Del Norte County.
- Del Norte County DHHS does not perform home visits because they do not have sufficient staff, even when all available positions are filled.
 - The DHHS has performed home visits in the past though not on a regular, ongoing basis.
 - The DHHS staff participating in the County Review Session noted that in the past when clients have told them not to visit them again, they comply with the clients' wishes.

Key Recommendations

- As of May 2016, Del Norte County DHHS has begun implementing the OCAT; DHHS needs to complete implementation of the OCAT and take full advantage of the information and recommendations provided by this tool.
- Since employment opportunities are limited, Del Norte County is encouraged to implement ESE Program placements as soon as possible.
 - The ESE Program can help create employment opportunities for CalWORKs clients by assisting employers with creating or expanding job openings.
 - Subsidies are an encouragement to employers to consider hiring CalWORKs clients.
 - The county received an allocation of \$211,597 for the ESE Program for state fiscal year 2015-16.
- Due to the lack of affordable housing, Del Norte County is strongly encouraged to apply for Housing Support Program funds in 2016 if funding remains available and new applications are accepted.
 - Resources for this program are available on the CDSS website at the [CalWORKs Housing Support Program](#) webpage, which includes Sample Housing Support Program proposals.
 - The Housing Support Program can be a valuable tool for the county to provide stability and security for CalWORKs families and increase participation.
- Del Norte County DHHS is encouraged to explore ways to reinstate home visits and make them a regular, ongoing aspect of casework.
 - Home visits can be another valuable tool for caseworkers to engage families and resolve barriers to fully participating in WTW, especially for families served by the Linkages and Family Stabilization programs.

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