

**Senate Bill 1041 Implementation
Field Monitoring
Visit Summary**

Lake County

September 23, 2014

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Welfare to Work Division
Todd R. Bland, Deputy Director

Lake County
Senate Bill (SB) 1041 Implementation
Field Monitoring Visit Summary

Executive Summary

Purpose of Field Monitoring Visit

The purpose of the Senate Bill (SB) 1041 Implementation Field Monitoring Visit is to obtain information regarding the county's progress in implementing program changes enacted by SB 1041 (Chapter 47, Statutes of 2012).

Scope of Field Monitoring Visit

Specifically, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) will review how each County Welfare Department (CWD) implemented SB 1041 program changes, including but not limited to:

- New Welfare to Work (WTW) participation requirements;
- WTW 24-Month Time Clock;
- Reengagement of the former short-term young child exempt population (Assembly Bill [AB] 4X 4 group);
- CWD staff knowledge of SB 1041 changes;
- Training provided to staff in order to implement these changes; and
- Any pertinent data related to these program changes that are available.

Goals of Field Monitoring Visit

The CDSS' goals are to ensure that SB 1041 is being implemented correctly by each CWD, to gather best practices in regards to implementation, to share these best practices (when able) amongst 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. If such issues exist, they will be addressed by the SB 1041 Oversight Workgroup.

County Visit General Information

The one-day field visit was performed in Lake County on Tuesday, September 23, 2014 at the Lake County Department of Social Services Employment Services Division in Lower Lake, CA. The field visit team included three staff from the CDSS, Welfare-to-Work Division, CalWORKs Employment and Eligibility Branch along with Lake County's Deputy Director, Program Manager, Staff Services Analyst, and two Employment and Training Workers (ETWs). The field visit consisted of a kick-off meeting, staff interviews, case management observations with county staff, and a close-out meeting.

Implementation Strategies

In December 2012, Lake County began SB 1041 Planning Meetings for the changes to WTW effective January 1, 2013. This included identifying forms/paperwork that needed to be changed, identifying immediate needs such as information and training materials, and updating or creating policy information. A SB 1041 Summary of Changes to WTW Effective January 1, 2013 was

developed, including an Implementing the SB 1041 Changes sheet, and an updated Welfare-to-Work Handbook. The county began orienting their workers in early January 2013.

Successes

Lake County's month-by-month approach to implementation of the SB 1041 program changes was well organized. The county developed a number of informative documents and tools to assist ETWs throughout the process. The overall structure of these documents appeared to benefit Lake County's implementation of SB 1041 program changes. Communication was a key to the county's SB 1041 implementation success with weekly staff meetings, bi-weekly policy meetings, and monthly one-on-one meetings between supervisors and staff.

Lake County provided thorough training to staff on the SB 1041 related program changes and the county continues to update staff as new All County Letters (ACLs) become available. Information and tools were shared through emails, unit meetings, power point presentations, online Statewide Automated Welfare System Consortium-IV (C-IV) procedures, flowcharts, staff enrichment days, Employment Services meetings, and handouts. Lake County used a Staff Services Analyst (SSA) who is well versed on ACLs relevant to SB 1041 to oversee and roll out all SB 1041 implementation changes. Lake County employs an open door policy between Supervisors, SSA, and staff, and ETWs take a hands-on approach to review ACLs individually and has a number of specialized ETWs and social workers in the county. The availability of vocational education programs is also a strength in Lake County.

The organized manner of reengagement and sequencing groups in Lake County facilitated a smooth implementation process. Lake County began their sequencing of groups with those clients who had six months or less remaining on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit, followed by clients with seven to twelve months remaining, and their last group of clients with 37 or more months remaining. Reengagement was handled by ETWs individually. Workers sent out the appropriate noticing, made phone calls, scheduled appointments, made reminder phone calls, and monitored through C-IV.

Key Recommendations

The CDSS recommends that Lake County continue to explore transportation alternatives to assist clients in remote areas of the county where access to services is limited. The CDSS suggests the county continue to develop and strengthen its Work Participation Rate (WPR) workgroup efforts to engage clients in work and increase the county's WPR. Lake County should continue to collect and monitor the SB 1041 implementation data submitted through its consortium system to the CDSS for the monthly CalWORKs Cash Grant Caseload Movement Reports (CA 237 CW), and CalWORKs WTW Monthly Activity Reports for All (Other) Families and Two Parent Families (WTW 25/25A) for accuracy. The CDSS recommends the county continue to strengthen the relationship with Yuba and Mendocino community college extensions and Marymount University.

Acknowledgments

The CDSS thanks Lake County Department of Social Services for hosting the field monitoring visit. The CDSS appreciates the open collaboration with CWD staff to ensure the continued success of the CalWORKs program.

Field Monitoring Visit Summary

Introduction

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Background and Data

Lake At-a-glance

Total Caseload.....**1,059**

(Source: CalWORKs Cash Grant Caseload Movement Report CA 237 CW Line Item 8a-July 2014)

WTW Enrollees.....**399**

(Source: CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Monthly Activity Report WTW 25/25A Line Item 1-July 2014)

Mandatory Participants (enrollees + sanctioned + non-compliance).....	599
(Source: CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Monthly Activity Report WTW 25/25A Line Items 1, 3A, and 31-July 2014)	
Reengagement Plan Received.....	Yes
Beginning Date of Reengagement.....	April 1, 2013
Consortium System.....	C-IV

Data/Statistics:

- Clients who had more than 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit as of January 1, 2013, that have had their comprehensive discussion: **218**.
- Clients who had less than or equal to 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit as of January 1, 2013, that have had their comprehensive discussion: **83**.
- Sanctions that were cured as a result of SB 1041: **The county did not track this; however, the estimate is very few.**
- Former short-term young child exempt clients (Assembly Bill [AB] X4 4) that have been reengaged: **146**.
- WTW plans that have changed as a result of SB 1041 implementation: **No hard data exists. Workers report most people who could reduce hours did, but relatively little change in activities.**
- Clients that have used the new once in a lifetime young child exemption: **102**.

Summary of Documents provided by Lake County:

- Instructional announcements provided by the county to county staff relevant to SB 1041 implementation.
- Informing notices and flyers provided to clients relevant to SB 1041 implementation.
- SB 1041 related training materials/aides (formal and informal) including but not limited to a list of training strategies, materials available on-line, and materials distributed during staff meetings.
- Lake County’s Reengagement Sequencing Plan.

County Administrator and Caseworker Interviews

The CDSS Field Monitoring Team used the county administrator and caseworker interview tools released in All County Information Notice I-42-13 to interview the county administrator and case workers in-person regarding SB 1041 implementation. The tools were provided to the county administrator and caseworkers in advance of the visit. The administrator interview panel consisted of four CDSS staff with one county administrator. The caseworker interviews were conducted by two CDSS staff members with one caseworker.

Summary of Observations

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

For clients with Less than 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit

The WTW 24-Month Time Clock General Informing Notice (CW 2205) was sent to clients in November 2012 by the Statewide Automated Welfare System Consortium-IV (C-IV). Lake County began their comprehensive discussions with 83 clients that had less than 24 months left on their clock on January 7, 2013. Clients were contacted by workers initially by phone to orient them to the new rules. An SB 1041 Appointment Letter was provided to clients when the county was

unable to contact them by phone in order to discuss SB 1041 changes, options, and potential amendments to existing plans. A 2013 WTW Comprehensive Discussion Document, LAK01489, was developed and presented to WTW staff during general meetings, and then reviewed in unit meetings where discussion and questions were encouraged. This Comprehensive Discussion Document included signature lines for both client and worker to document the information that was shared and is now a permanent form used in orientation of all new clients.

Lake County reported that very few clients opted to change their WTW plans or assigned activities. Clients did choose to utilize the reduced hourly requirements and WTW 24-Month Time Clock flexibility regarding activities in order to attend school.

For clients with more than 24 months left on their CalWORKS 48-month time limit

Lake County started SB 1041 transition for this group in January 2013 for 218 clients. In general, clients with more than 24 months remaining on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit chose to meet federal standards and not have their WTW 24-Month Time Clock tick. The ETWs discussed the WTW 24-Month Time Clock during the Comprehensive Discussion appointment along with the WTW Handbook. This allowed clients to ask questions as they came up during the process and have a better understanding of the rules and expectations.

At the time of the field monitoring visit, Lake County had completed all comprehensive discussions.

Clients who failed to attend SB 1041 appointments:

Lake County's action towards clients who were unresponsive to contact varied depending on the client's situation. If clients already had WTW plans that met the new requirements and they were participating, the county completed the Comprehensive Discussion tool and the new WTW 2 at their next regular office visit. If they were not participating adequately, then the county attempted to contact them by phone, letter, or home visits. If clients failed to attend this appointment and/or make contact with their ETW, the non-compliance process was initiated.

General Comments

Lake County has two offices staffed in Lower Lake to assist clients with Eligibility and WTW. The county also provides outreach assistance to a number of areas of the county that are not near a county office. The average caseload for WTW caseworkers is 80 cases with each worker performing full-time case management. Each ETW contacted their clients that were potentially eligible to the new exemption or a decrease in hours first.

New Young Child Exemption

Lake reported 102 clients have received the new young child exemption.

The new WTW Activity Plan/Form (WTW 2)

The new WTW 2 form was made available on the CDSS website and the county began its use effective January 1, 2013.

General Comments

The ETWs interviewed felt that the WTW 2 is effective as a guide during a client's SB 1041 discussion. It allows the client to have a visual on the different options they can select from and ETWs indicated they liked how the WTW 2 breaks down the activities into two columns. It makes it easier to explain and to show the client that when they are meeting CalWORKs federal standards, their WTW 24-Month Time Clock won't tick. Some ETWs noted that some clients were confused by all of the initialing required on the WTW 2 and that they would initial if receiving supportive services. The ETWs indicated that clients seem to understand the WTW 2 overall.

Lake County has a good relationship with its two community college extensions, Yuba and Mendocino. Additionally, Marymount University just opened and enrolled its first semester students and offers bachelor and master degree programs. The county offers scholarships and some county staff is currently attending.

Reengagement Process

Lake County sent out the Young Child Exemption Ends December 31, 2012, New Rules for CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Activities form (CW 2206) notifying all AB X4 4 exempt clients of changes to the CalWORKs program implemented by SB 1041 in January 2013 (or prior to reengagement). The county's reengagement process officially began on April 1, 2013. Appointment letters were issued at least 30 days prior to the client's Reengagement evaluation appointment. The ETWs monitored their clients by workload inventory, automated tasks in C-IV, clients' activity renewal dates, and excel spreadsheets.

Lake County's Sequencing Plan was as follows:

- **April 1, 2013**-Clients with six months or less remaining on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit.
- **On or before August 1, 2013**- Clients with seven to twelve months remaining on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit.
- **On or before January 1, 2014**-Clients with 13-24 months remaining on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit.
- **On or before April 1, 2014** – Clients with 25-36 months remaining on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit.
- **August 1, 2014** –Clients with 37 or more months remaining on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit.

The reengagement process for Lake County includes the following:

- Send a CW 2206 at least 60 days prior to reengagement evaluation appointment;
- Case file review; and
- Send a reengagement evaluation appointment letter (LAK1448) at least 30 days prior to reengagement evaluation appointment with a CW 2186A and a copy of the CW 2206.
- Call client ten days prior to their reengagement date and mail a reminder letter out regarding their reengagement appointment.

The ETWs document telephone calls in case comments and allow one reschedule for those that cannot attend the appointment. The telephone contact must include SB 1041 discussion points

for clients who are not required to attend in-person such as exempt volunteers who are fully meeting participation requirements.

During a client's SB 1041 appointment, ETWs go over the WTW Handbook, explain all of the policies, rules, and regulations of the program, explain the Comprehensive Discussion Document, and answer any client questions. Exemptions are explained to clients along with which ones they may be eligible to receive. Information is shared regarding how many months remain on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit and what "timing out" means. Clients are also provided with a general description of available supportive services. The ETWs determine clients' status and needs, and if any WTW exemptions apply. Some clients did not want to participate and chose to be sanctioned. Other clients were eligible for the new young child exemption, so they decided to take the new exemption and continue being exempt.

Volunteers

AB X4 4 short term exempt clients who were volunteering in the WTW program on December 31, 2013 were allowed to continue volunteering until they were reengaged (February 1, 2013). However, Lake County had no exempt clients in the reengagement population that wanted to volunteer.

General Comments

At the time of this visit, Lake County had completed all five phases of the reengagement process. Tools were developed and distributed to assist ETWs throughout the process which included a flowchart, new forms, and a cheat sheet. Reengagement training was given in April 2013, including policy instructions for noticing and reengaging clients, and demonstrations of sample reengagement procedures were enacted by workers during a "staff enrichment day." Additionally, a refresher course in reengagement was presented in March 2014.

Implementation Strategies

Prior to implementation of SB 1041, the county began reviewing and analyzing All County Letters (ACLs) as they were published and discussed with managers, subject matter experts, and staff. Topics discussed included the WTW 24-Month Time Clock, reengagement, the new young child exemption, outreach to sanction clients, Cal-Learn, participation hours, informing notices, self-initiated programs (SIPs), the WTW 2, tracking of the WTW 24-Month Time Clock, and methods of distributing information to staff. Lake County staff also attended the CalWORKs Training Academy in December 2013. Beginning January 2, 2013, implementation strategies consisted of orienting staff to changes and distributing a number of policy and tools for staff to utilize. A power point presentation was developed on the C-IV updates along with information on starting the WTW 24-Month Time Clock. The county developed several tools such as flowcharts, cheat sheets, and new forms to assist staff.

Case Reviews

The CDSS Field Monitoring Team reviewed five cases selected by the CWD in advance of the visit. The purpose of this component of the visit is to review how SB 1041 program changes are being

integrated into case management, understand how SB 1041 policies are being operationalized by the caseworker, and better comprehend case management within the county.

There were five specific case types requested:

- Case One-a client with **less than or equal to** 24 months left on the CalWORKs 48-month time limit as of January 1, 2013;
- Case Two-a client with **more than** 24 months on the CalWORKs 48-month time limit as of January 1, 2013;
- Case Three-a new client (beginning date of aid January 1, 2013 or later);
- Case Four-a client who was sanctioned that had reported earnings and whose case was curable based on the new participation requirements (preferably a case actually cured since January 1, 2013 based on new participation requirements); and
- Case Five-a client that is part of the short-term young child exemption (AB X4 4)/ reengagement population, and is in the process of or has been reengaged.

General Comments

Lake County uses the C-IV consortium case management data system. The following is a summary of the case findings:

Noticing Requirements

All noticing requirements for the CW 2205 and the Your Welfare-to-Work 24-Month Time Clock (CW 2208) were met for all cases reviewed.

Comprehensive Discussions and Additional Outreach

Comprehensive Discussions were completed and noted on the SB 1041 Comprehensive Discussion Document and imaged into the C-IV consortium system.

WTW Plan Activity Assignment Form (WTW 2)

Four case files reviewed had WTW plans developed on or after January 2013 and used the new WTW 2. One case reviewed did not have a WTW 2 due to the client's pre-assessment activity agreement as the client had not yet been assessed.

Sanction Case

Lake County reviewed the client's reported employment; however, he did not meet the required hours and did not make contact with his ETW to get reengaged in WTW.

Reengagement Case

The cases reviewed met all reengagement noticing requirements, including the CW 2206, timelines for the secondary contact/appointment, third contact attempted by telephone and when the client couldn't be reached, and a Reengagement Evaluation Notice (LAK 1488) was mailed a second time.

New Young Child Exemption

One of the cases reviewed was eligible for the New Young Child Exemption but chose not to use the exemption because it would have only lasted for two months.

Learning Disability Screening and Supportive Services

A learning disability screening was offered to clients in all cases reviewed. Two clients waived the screening and three declined. Supportive Services were offered and/or issued and were documented in all of the case files reviewed.

Lake County makes additional efforts to outreach to its sanction population. The county has a dedicated Social Worker who attempts to engage clients, and begins by issuing a letter for a home visit. If the client is a “no show”, the worker attempts to contact them by phone. If there is still no response, another letter is sent for a future home visit. The county worker does not show up unannounced unless the client’s case is about to close. Monthly calls are made to continue outreaching to this population.

Conclusion

Successes

Lake County’s month-by-month approach to implementation of the SB 1041 program changes was well organized. The county developed a number of informative documents and tools to assist ETWs throughout the process. The overall structure of these documents appeared to benefit Lake County’s implementation of SB 1041 program changes. Communication was a key to the county’s SB 1041 implementation success with weekly staff meetings, bi-weekly policy meetings, and monthly one-on-ones between supervisors and staff.

Lake County provided thorough training to staff on the SB 1041 related program changes and the county continues to update staff as new ACLs become available. Information and tools were shared through emails, unit meetings, power point presentations, online C-IV procedures, flowcharts, staff enrichment days, Employment Services (ES) meetings, and handouts. Lake County used a SSA who is well versed on ACLs relevant to SB 1041 to oversee and roll out all SB 1041 implementation changes. Lake County employs an open door policy between Supervisors, SSA, and staff, and ETWs take a hands-on approach to review CDSS posted ACLs individually.

The organized manner of reengagement and sequencing groups in Lake County facilitated a smooth implementation process. Lake County began their sequencing of groups with those clients who had six months or less remaining on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit, followed by clients with seven to twelve months remaining, with their last group of clients with 37 or more months remaining. Reengagement was handled by ETWs individually. Workers sent out the appropriate noticing, made phone calls, scheduled appointments, made reminder phone calls, and monitored through the C-IV consortium system.

The county has a number of specialized ETWs and social workers in the county, and the availability of vocational education programs in Lake County is also a strength. The county has two bulletin boards posted in their lobby to assist and congratulate the success of their clients: a “Jobs” board listing ongoing job offerings, and a “Success” board recognizing clients who received jobs.

Challenges

Lake County found the implementation of such significant program changes difficult due to the short amount of time and the complexity. Several ETWs found some changes were unclear which created a lack of confidence among some workers, while others found it difficult to remember the significant amount of additional details.

The county's biggest challenge is with transportation services due to the geographic layout of Clear Lake in the county, especially for clients in the northeast side of the county.

The ETWs felt the reengagement process was too long from the first notice being mailed out in November 2012 and the actual phasing in of the clients. Another area of concern was notifying clients that their exemption was ending on a certain date, and then a follow-up letter stating that exemption was extended.

Key Recommendations

The CDSS recommends that Lake County continue to explore transportation alternatives to assist clients in remote areas of the county where access to services is limited. The CDSS suggests the county continue to develop and strengthen its Work Participation Rate (WPR) workgroup efforts to engage clients in work and increase the county's WPR. Lake County should continue to collect and monitor the SB 1041 implementation data submitted through its consortium system to the CDSS for the monthly CalWORKs Cash Grant Caseload Movement Reports (CA 237 CW), and CalWORKs WTW Monthly Activity Reports for All (Other) Families and Two Parent Families (WTW 25/25A) for accuracy. The CDSS recommends the county continue to strengthen the relationship with Yuba and Mendocino community college extensions and Marymount University.

Contact

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