

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

Placer County

Visit Date: April 29, 2014

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

Placer 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 short term young child exempt population (Assembly Bill [AB] X4 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 promising practices in regards to implementation, to share these promising 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

This one-day field monitoring visit was performed in Placer County on Tuesday, April 29, 2014, at the Placer County Human Service Department in Rocklin, CA. The field visit team included two managers and two staff member from the CDSS, Welfare-to-Work Division, CalWORKs Employment and Eligibility Branch along with Placer County, Human Services Director, CalWORKs and Employment Services Manager, and three Client Services Program Supervisors. The field visit consisted of a kick-off meeting, close-out meeting, staff interviews, and case management observations with county staff.

Implementation Strategies

Placer County implemented the SB 1041 related program changes in phases as All County Letters (ACLs) were released by the CDSS and provided county staff with multiple instructional

notices and flyers. Staff trainings were also done in phases as new information became available and were held in November 2012 and January 2013. Placer County developed training materials by utilizing PowerPoint presentations, handouts, and classroom style group discussions. Discussions occurred at the county's WTW Supervisor meeting and staff team meetings. In addition to the presentations/trainings, staff was provided information through Department Memorandums and emails from supervisors. The presentations/training and additional information were provided to all staff that work with CalWORKs clients. Training materials were provided to the CDSS and aligned with SB 1041 implementation instructions issued by the CDSS. The county's training material was based on the training material provided by the CDSS through All County Information Notice (ACIN) I-08-13.

Successes

Placer County's SB 1041 training process was very successful and included providing PowerPoint presentations titled "Changes to Employment Services (ES) 2013", overview of the WTW 24 Month Time Clock, procedures, scripts and CW exemption clock stoppers (cheat sheets). Client Services Counselors in Placer County were also able to have thorough comprehensive discussions with clients using the checklist tool as well as utilizing the new WTW Plan Activity Assignment (WTW 2) form effectively to ensure client understanding.

Placer County's utilization of Business Advantage Networks (BAN) is a robust program that includes partnership with the business community in Placer county and surrounding areas in providing job placement to CalWORKs clients.

Placer County has an expanded subsidized employment program in place that provides opportunities to build job-readiness skills which are necessary in order to achieve permanent and sustaining employment. They also offer paid internships for students to provide experience in their field of study. Placer contracts with The Community College Foundation as the employer of record and collaborates with local non-profits, chambers of commerce, staffing agencies and the local Workforce Investment Board to connect with local employers. These relationships provide clients with the opportunity to learn job-readiness skills, which are necessary in order to achieve permanent and sustaining employment.

The CDSS also recognizes Placer County for its office which is physically co-located with many other service providers that CalWORKs clients may find beneficial. Along with the CalWORKs Employment office, other tenants include Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC), Human Services, Child Support, Children System of Care (Child Welfare), Veterans Services and Public Health Nursing. This cluster of like services supports CalWORKs clients and creates opportunities for individuals to more easily obtain assistance from other programs for which they are eligible.

Key Recommendations

Placer County is encouraged to continue improving outreach efforts to sanctioned clients. Placer County may want to reconsider reinstating the home visiting program for sanctioned clients.

Placer County should communicate automation issues with the CalWORKs Information Network (CalWIN) to ensure all notices and ability to document client information is updated. The county should also collaborate with the CalWIN system to ensure drug felons are not counted as sanctioned clients.

The CDSS also recommends that Placer County continue to pay closer attention to the data that is submitted through their consortium system to the Department such as the CalWORKs WTW Monthly Activity Report for All (Other Families and Two Parent Families (WTW 25/25A)). These sources are relied upon heavily by the Department so accurate reporting from counties will ensure a better understanding of how SB 1041 changes have affected clients in the CalWORKs program.

Acknowledgments

The CDSS thanks the Placer County Human Service Departments in Rocklin, CA for hosting this 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

Placer County at-a-glance

Total Caseload	1,683
(Source: CalWORKs Cash Grant Caseload Movement Report [CA 237 CW] Line Item 8a – February 2014)	
WTW Enrollees	706
(Source: CalWORKs Welfare to Work Monthly Activity Report [WTW 25/25A] Line Item 1 - February 2014)	
Mandatory Participants (enrollees + sanctioned + non-compliance)	997
(Source: CalWORKs Welfare to Work Monthly Activity Report [WTW 25/25A] Line Item 1, 3A, and 31 - February 2014)	
Reengagement Plan Received	Yes
Beginning Date of Reengagement	April 1, 2013
Consortium System	CalWIN

Data/Statistics Available at Time of Field Monitoring Visit

- Clients with more than 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit as of January 1, 2013 who have had their comprehensive discussion: **239**
- Clients with less than 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit as of January 1, 2013 who have had their comprehensive discussion: **41**
- Clients who elected to change their WTW Plan as a result of SB 1041 new participation requirements: **58**
- Sanctions that were cured as a result of SB 1041: **0**
- Clients who have met the definition of reengaged: **97**
- Clients who have elected to take the New Young Child Exemption: **166**

Summary of Documents provided by Placer 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 (formal and informal) including but not limited to training presentations, training practice scenarios, flyers provided to staff, and materials distributed during staff meetings.
- Placer 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 county administrators and caseworkers in-person regarding SB 1041 implementation. The tool was provided to the county administrators and caseworkers in advance of the visit. The administrator interview panel consisted of four CDSS staff with four county administrators. The caseworker interviews were conducted by four CDSS staff members with two caseworkers.

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

Placer County sent out the New Rules for CalWORKs WTW Activities (CW 2205) form using the CalWIN system on November 28, 2012 to all non-excluded WTW eligible adults, both English and Spanish speaking, who received cash aid on behalf of or with a child, including sanctioned adults and clients with a current young child exemption. Comprehensive discussions with clients with less than 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit began on January 2, 2013, for 239 clients. At the time of the field monitoring visit, Placer County had completed all comprehensive discussions.

In general, clients were choosing the lower hourly requirements and choosing to participate in non-core activities. Clients did choose to utilize the reduced hourly requirements and WTW 24-Month Time Clock flexibility regarding activities in order to attend school. A number of clients with Self-Initiated Programs (SIPs) chose to lower their hourly requirements so they can focus on their education and obtaining better grades.

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

Placer County began comprehensive discussions with clients with more than 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit on January 2, 2013, for 41 clients, all of which have been completed. Clients are choosing a wide variety of flexible options on a case-by-case basis.

Clients who failed to attend SB 1041 appointments

Placer County made contact with clients regarding the comprehensive discussion and new participation requirements at their next scheduled appointment, by phone, when the client came into the office to pick up supportive services, or the next time the client needed to sign a new WTW Plan Activity Assignment (WTW 2) form. If clients failed to attend this appointment and failed to make contact with their Client Services Counselors, the non-compliance process was initiated.

General Comments

Client Services Counselors used to carry approximately 65-75 cases and currently they are carrying 45-50 including active, noncompliance, exempt and sanction cases. The message given to county staff regarding the WTW 24-Month Time Clock is a sense of determination to maximize this time and do everything they can to ensure client success as soon as possible. The roll-out of the WTW 24-Month Time Clock in Placer County was client-focused. Clients are/were encouraged to take advantage of the options that are available to them that best suit their needs. Placer County is working on additional outreach for sanctioned cases and is considering restating a home visiting program.

Placer County has been able to maintain a very successful Work Experience (WEX) program during this period of change.

Placer County has good size student population and has found that the new program rules are beneficial to students. Placer County meets with community colleges bi-monthly, or quarterly at a minimum, and has provided them with a checklist of information they need to provide to the clients and staff.

New Young Child Exemption

Placer County reported 166 clients have opted to take the new young child exemption as of April 29, 2014. Some sanctions were cured due to the new young child exemption and/or new program flexibility.

General Comments

Client Services Counselors have noticed that some clients who are eligible for the New Young Child Exemption have opted to not take the exemption as it is a once in a lifetime exemption.

The new WTW Plan Activity Assignment (WTW 2)

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

General Comments

Client Services Counselors had mixed opinions about the new version of the WTW 2 form. Some counselors liked how the state and federal activity requirements are shown side by side which helps some clients understand that core/non-core requirements only apply to the federal requirements while the WTW 24-month time clock requirements are more flexible. Other counselors stated not much worked with the new form as they, along with their clients, found it confusing and felt that the amount of information required was too much.

Reengagement Process

Placer County's reengagement process for AB X4 4 clients officially began on January 31, 2013. The CW 2206 mass mailer was sent on January 31, 2013 to the four groups listed in their reengagement sequencing plan (see below). Reengagement began on April 1, 2013 and each group began their reengagement appointments following the notification requirements as specified in ACL 13-01. Placer County management considered the pros and cons for engaging each population and determined the sequence. Placer County has a target completion date for reengagement of April 30, 2014, but expects to complete the reengagement process ahead of that date.

Placer County's Reengagement Sequencing Plan is as follows:

April 2013 - Engage present AB X4 4 exemptees with a second parent sanctioned

Engage present AB X4 4 exemptees that are current volunteers participating (when second parent's current plan ends).

All other present AB X4 4 exemptees on the date AB X4 4 would have ended for them had the exemption continued

All other present AB X4 4 exemptees on the date AB X4 4 would have ended for them had the exemption continued past 12/31/12; for those that would end after 2013, the month it would have ended from 4/1/2013 to 4/30/14.

Placer County allowed clients to reengage upon request ahead of their reengagement sequencing process. County staff also discussed and explained other exemptions that may be available to the clients and the new WTW requirements. Placer County noted some clients wanted to reengage earlier because they wanted to participate in school and receive supportive services such as books and transportation.

Clients who were voluntarily participating were allowed to continue volunteering until their volunteer status ended and then were required to sign a new WTW 2, or at the client's redetermination date.

Implementation Strategies

Placer County prepared for implementing the SB 1041 related program changes by doing the following:

- Researching the legislation and reading information provided by the CDSS;
- Analyzing ACLs as they were published;
- Sending out notices per ACLs;
- Attending County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) meetings and regional meetings to discuss changes and implementation strategies;
- Informing staff of potential changes;
- Training staff on the changes and providing direction and guidance for implementation;
- Determining staff needs and forming a reengagement team;
- Developing tracking devices to assure that clients were noticed per regulation timeframes;
- Determining the groups for the reengagement sequence;
- Working with contracted service providers and adapting service when able;
- Involving internal partners in discussions and programmatic decision making;
- Preparing a plan to utilize the facilities available for added workshops and orientations;
- Ordering supplies and equipment to meet additional workshop needs;
- Updating the WTW handbook, job club curriculum, and other materials to correctly reflect the changes;
- Translating the job club curriculum into Spanish in order to provide job readiness in a group setting;
- Determining verbiage for WTW 2 forms and other client correspondence;

- Developing a checklist of the new program changes for staff to use in their discussions with clients; and
- Developing journal entry templates to ensure staff are covering the information at appropriate times.

Placer County provided training to staff on the new WTW 24-Month Time Clock, new WTW participation requirements, reengagement, the new young child exemption, and the new WTW 2. As new ACLs or clarification on existing ACLs become available, the county continues to update their staff. Training was provided at staff meetings with follow-up at individual team meetings. In addition, information has been disseminated via email, questions and answers lists, and updated procedures have been posted online for easy reference. SB 1041 implementation was introduced on January 10, 2013, at an all staff meeting. Training also included initial appraisal discussion points, a flow chart, and sample case processing scenarios. Training was presented via PowerPoint presentations and handout material. During an additional staff meeting, the WTW 24-Month Time Clock was introduced and training provided. This training included a checklist that was created to review with clients during an initial appraisal and/or the CW 2186A was reviewed and questions were answered regarding the form. On March 15, 2013, training was provided on the new WTW 2 form. The training included page by page review of the new form with comparison made to the old form.

Lead staff members were involved in trainings and were well versed on the ACLs relevant to their assigned lead area. Supervisors shared either the actual ACLs or information from the ACLs with their team during team meetings. Additional information on program changes was provided during monthly staff meetings. To ensure staff understood the changes, the supervisors monitored their progress through interview observations and targeted case reviews.

General Comments

Placer County developed their own training material and they used the CDSS Training Aid. County staff discussed the new program changes including the WTW 24-Month Time Clock and any relevant exemptions with clients. Staff were informed of the elimination of core/noncore hours of participation in specified activities at the state level while understanding the potential impact on the federal WPR. Staff were encouraged to help clients make an informed decision and to determine what was the best plan for each client. County staff recognized that the WTW 24-Month Time Clock rules provide more flexibility for clients to attend activities of their choice.

Case Reviews

The CDSS field monitoring team reviewed three out five cases selected by Placer County in advance of the visit. The purpose of this component of the visit was to review how SB 1041 program changes are being integrated into case management, understand how SB 1041 policies

are being operationalized by individual Client Services Counselors, and better comprehend case management within Placer 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 left 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, 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 was part of the short term young child exemption (AB X4 4) population, and is in the process of or has been reengaged (if applicable).

General Comments

Placer County uses the CalWIN management system. The following is a summary of the case findings:

- *Noticing Requirements*
All clients received the CW 2205 on November 9, 2012. All noticing requirements were met.
- *Comprehensive discussions and additional outreach*
Comprehensive discussions were being noted within the case files and the new WTW 2 was being used and kept on file. Short and long term goals were reflected in the cases. New clients receive the comprehensive discussion components as part of orientation.
- *Hourly Requirements*
One client opted to take advantage of the new lower hourly requirement of 20 hours for an adult with a child under six years of age.
- *Learning disability screening*
A learning disability screening was offered to all five cases reviewed. All five cases waived this screening.
- *Supportive services*
Supportive services offered and/or issued were being documented in case files. All five cases reviewed were made aware of available supportive services.

Conclusion

Successes

Placer County's SB 1041 training process was very successful and included providing PowerPoint presentations titled "Changes to ES 2013", overview of the WTW 24 Month Time Clock, procedures, scripts and CW exemption clock stoppers (cheat sheets). Employment Services Counselors in Placer County were also able to have thorough comprehensive discussions with clients using the checklist tool as well as utilizing the new WTW Plan Activity Assignment (WTW 2) form effectively to ensure client understanding.

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Challenges

Placer County found it was difficult to implement the new changes timely due to the delay in guidance from the CDSS. Client Service's Counselor acknowledged that at times it has been difficult explaining these changes to ensure that clients fully understand not only the changes, but what the changes really mean to them and their future in the WTW program. Staff noted that initially the front page of the WTW 2 which includes double columns, reflecting the two different types of participation requirements (WTW 24-Month Time Clock and CalWORKs federal standards) felt 'too busy' and was difficult for clients to comprehend.

Key Recommendations

Placer County is encouraged to continue improving outreach efforts to sanctioned clients. Placer County may want to reconsider reinstating the home visiting program for sanctioned clients.

Placer County should communicate automation issues with the CalWORKs Information Network (CalWIN) to ensure all notices and ability to document client information is updated. The county should also collaborate with the CalWIN system to ensure drug felons are not counted as sanctioned clients.

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Contact

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