

Inyo County's CalWORKs Program

CalWORKs in Inyo County is part of the integrated programs operated by the Health and Human Services Department. As such, CalWORKs has strong working linkages to Employment services, Mental Health and Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco treatment and prevention programs, Public Health and Child Welfare Services. The CalWORKs unit is developing operational practices and agreements with our One-Stop Career Center partners to further the goals of collaborative, simple-to-access services for employers and employees.

CalWORKs Personnel

The CalWORKs unit consists of a Program Manager, a Human Services Supervisor, six Integrated Case Workers, as well as three eligibility workers who do CalWORKs eligibility as well as all other program in our smaller, southern office. The Case Worker positions are part of a two-tiered career ladder, allowing for advancement. Other positions give some level of support to the program. This configuration represents major change for Inyo, and not all the positions are filled at this time.

Locations, Work Environments

We essentially are running three different configurations of programs to meet the needs of various areas in our county.

In Bishop, where 80% of our population goes for services, the CalWORKs unit is planning to relocate in early 2000 to the developing One-Stop Career Center. Our main partners who will be co-locating with us will be the Employment Development Department (EDD), JTPA, California Indian Manpower Consortium and our Community Action Agency, which also runs employment and training programs including our private-for-profit work experience slots. All other mandated and many optional partners are meeting with us to assess their best role in the Career Center. We hope for a major presence from our Vocational Rehabilitation, Regional Center, Adult Education and Community College District as well as a growing collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and other members of the business community.

Our Lone Pine Health and Human Services office is located 60 miles south of Bishop on Highway 395. This is an integrated service office, offering CalWORKs eligibility and case management, all other public assistance programs, Public Health, Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol and Probation services. Here three eligibility workers with generic caseloads work closely with a CalWORKs Integrated Case Worker to provide a full range of employment and training services.

Finally, for our most remote clients we have agreements with other jurisdictions to provide welfare to work services, coordinated by the Lone Pine based integrated Case Worker. At our southern border, clients are referred to Kern County by their eligibility worker for services beyond eligibility. To the east, an agreement with the State of Nevada allows our clients to access JTPA services. A part-time case manager stationed in remote Tecopa, helps follow-up CalWORKs clients and assist with employment barriers. These agreements permit clients to travel no longer than an hour to the nearest populated area for services, and assists us in reaching our goal of 100% access to services.

Program Flow

Upon receiving a request for aid from a client, the Case Worker completes a needs assessment interview at which time it is determined if an application for diversion or CalWORKs is appropriate. If an application for CalWORKs is made, the worker conducts an eligibility determination, an appraisal interview and makes the appropriate referrals for services. The clients remain with their initial Case Worker who oversees the case. Case work is a team effort and involves CalWORKs staff, Mental Health counselors, Alcohol and Drug case managers and Child Protective Service workers as needed. The team configuration allows for a collaborative approach to the delivery of services. All clients attend Orientation. Most attend a two week class using a specialized curriculum designed to be used to meet the individual needs of the client. During times of low client flow these services may be individualized. Assessment is conducted from the moment the client enters the program and continues throughout the two week class. At the conclusion of the class, an Employment Development Plan is completed for each client and a contract is signed for the next activity. Barriers to employment re identified in the plan. Those barriers that require services from the counseling staff are addressed in a timely manner

Client status is traced; due to the transitional status of automated tracking, much data is recorded manually.

System Supports

The above system is supported by a variety of training and staffing meetings. Our CalWORKs Integrated Case Workers have been attending our weekly HHS Child and Family Staffing meetings this year. This 30 to 60 minute period allows them to review difficult cases with social workers, mental health and drug and alcohol counselors. Clients are informed in their initial interview of this practice and sign an appropriate release. This practice has increased the professional image of our Case Workers besides providing great benefit to clients.

CalWORKs staff have become dependent on their "4:30 meetings," a time every day to check in with each other and management regarding on-going cases. Various partners attend one of these meetings each week so that CalWORKs

staff can make direct contact regarding any issues with child care, JTPA, WtW, the Community Action Agency and other resources.

A CalWORKs Case Worker attends our Multidisciplinary Meetings (MDT) with our counseling staff, schools and Probation. This allows coordination of services for certain multi-agency clients.

Trainers are brought in whenever possible to address issues identified by staff and their supervisors. Employees have individual supervision at least bi-weekly with their supervisor to address performance issues and allow staff input to management process.

A CalWORKs Steering Committee meets bi-monthly to address issues raised by staff, managers and the state. The Steering Committee includes the HHS Director and Assistant Director, Program Managers, Supervisors and Help Desk staff.

Challenges

The following challenges have been identified as those we will address with increased resources this year:

1. Better coordination and use of CalWORKs training slots with JTPA and WtW.
2. Transportation.
3. Need to increase involvement of the Community College
4. Job to Career issues: workforce development aimed at eventual careers that allow clients to be self-sufficient. This includes more emphasis on those who are not CalWORKs clients but who need this service.
5. Economic Development

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