

January 30, 2025

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 25-09**

The purpose of this letter is to provide information to Child Welfare Services agencies and Juvenile Probation Departments regarding the provisions of Assembly Bill 135 (Chapter 85, Statutes of 2021) and case plan documentation requirements for family reunification cases involving families with children removed from the home while aided with California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids.



JENNIFER TROIA  
DIRECTOR

CALIFORNIA HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**  
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GAVIN NEWSOM  
GOVERNOR

January 30, 2025

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 25-09

TO: ALL CALWORKS PROGRAM SPECIALISTS  
ALL COUNTY LINKAGES COORDINATORS  
ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS  
ALL COUNTY WELFARE-TO-WORK COORDINATORS  
ALL CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS  
ALL CHILD WELFARE SERVICES PROGRAM MANAGERS  
ALL FOSTER CARE MANAGERS  
ALL FOSTER FAMILY AGENCIES  
ALL PLACEMENT WORKERS

SUBJECT: **CASE PLAN DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS FOR CALIFORNIA WORK OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO KIDS FAMILY REUNIFICATION CASES**

REFERENCE: [45 CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS 1356.21](#)  
[ASSEMBLY BILL 135 \(CHAPTER 85, STATUTES OF 2021\),](#)  
[WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE \(WIC\) SECTION 361.5,](#)  
[WIC 16501.1, CHILD WELFARE SERVICES MANUAL OF](#)  
[POLICIES AND PROCEDURES DIVISION 31-206 TO 31-225,](#)  
[MANUAL OF POLICIES PROCEDURES DIVISION 82-812,](#)  
[ALL COUNTY LETTER \(ACL\) 23-94, ACL 02-36, AND](#)  
[ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE \(ACIN\) 25-23](#)

The purpose of this All County Letter (ACL) is to provide information to Child Welfare Services (CWS) agencies and Juvenile Probation Departments (JPD) regarding the provisions of Assembly Bill (AB) 135 (Chapter 85, Statutes of 2021) and CWS case plan documentation requirements for California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Family Reunification (FR) cases.

**BACKGROUND**

Federal law, [45 Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) 1356.21\(e\)](#), allows children in foster care to return home for trial visits while the family continues to receive support, services,

and supervision through FR, not to exceed six months in duration. CWS agencies that offer trial home visits to parents, legal guardians, or Indian custodians may benefit from the CalWORKs FR childcare assistance, if the parent is working or attending employment activities under CalWORKs. AB 135 authorizes the provision of cash aid and childcare services to families participating in CalWORKs FR. AB 135 also extends the temporary absence period for FR from 180 calendar days to six full months as part of the reunification case plan. A temporary absence period is when one of the members of the assistance unit<sup>1</sup>, is temporarily absent from the home. Effective January 1, 2025, all members in an assistance unit will be eligible to receive a CalWORKs grant, childcare, and reunification services, provided all the following conditions are met:

1. All CalWORKs-eligible children were removed from the home and temporarily placed in out-of-home care by the county CWS agency<sup>2</sup>.
2. At least one parent, legal guardian, Indian custodian, or needy caretaker relative must have received CalWORKs at the time of the child/ren's removal to be eligible for CalWORKs reunification services, childcare, and cash aid. Welfare To Work (WTW) sanctioned parents whose aid stopped due to failure to comply with the program requirements may participate in CalWORKs FR services (if CWS or a juvenile court has determined that such services are necessary for reunification) but are not eligible for cash aid under CalWORKs FR until they cure their sanction. Health and Human Service Agencies (HHSAs) and CWS agencies are encouraged to work together and use the CWS case plan to assist the family in curing their sanction.
3. The CWS agency or juvenile court has determined that the provision of cash aid, childcare, and/or CalWORKs FR services is necessary for reunification and a CWS reunification case plan reflecting this determination is in effect.

The CalWORKs FR services may be extended beyond six months if CWS grants a good cause extension as outlined in [ACL 02-36](#). A good cause extension may be granted under two conditions: (1) the CWS reunification case plan extends beyond the initial 180 days or six months from removal or, (2) additional time is required to complete the court-ordered reunification case plan. The CalWORKs FR cash aid is limited to a maximum of six months from the time it is granted, and it may not be extended.

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<sup>1</sup> The assistance unit (AU) is a group of related persons living in the same home who have been determined eligible for CalWORKs and for whom cash aid has been authorized.

<sup>2</sup> However, there is an exception provided in accordance with [ACL 23-94](#) which allows CalWORKs FR eligibility when not all children are removed from the home and the aided adult on the case is WTW sanctioned.

### **CALIFORNIA WORK OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO KIDS FAMILY REUNIFICATION SERVICES**

Upon notification that the caseworker (social worker or probation officer) has recommended, or a juvenile court has ordered FR, the CalWORKs worker must initiate FR and continue the CalWORKs cash grant for a maximum of six months provided the family remains eligible. Including a recommendation for the provision of cash aid in the case plan will ensure timely implementation and mitigate any possible service delays. A court order is not necessary to initiate CalWORKs FR services; a notification from the CWS agency to the HHSA that a case plan is being developed that will include CalWORKs FR services and cash aid is sufficient. This notification will be dependent on county processes. Reunification case plans that do not include a cash aid recommendation must be amended prior to cash aid approval. The caseworker must document the need for CalWORKs FR in the CWS case plan. The CalWORKs cash grant may be modified upon notification from the caseworker or the juvenile court that the case plan goal has changed to return the child home, and the FR cash aid is limited to a maximum of six months. If all children are removed from the home and the CWS caseworker or the juvenile court does not order reunification, the parent, legal guardian, or Indian custodian is not eligible for any CalWORKs FR services or cash aid and the CalWORKs case must be discontinued at the end of the initial temporary absence period.

### **CHILD WELFARE SERVICES CASE PLAN DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS**

For the parent, legal guardian, or Indian custodian to be eligible for CalWORKs FR cash aid, the caseworker must document FR as the goal and that cash aid would assist in meeting that goal in the case plan. [WIC section 16501.1\(b\)\(5\)](#), requires reasonable services to be offered or provided to make it possible for a child to return home unless the juvenile court determines that pursuant to [WIC 361.5\(b\) and/or \(e\)](#) reunification services shall not be provided. These must be documented in the case plan. In the case of an Indian child, active efforts must be documented and provided. The specific goals and the appropriateness of the planned services in meeting those goals must be documented in the case plan. The caseworker must complete the case plan within 60 days of initial removal or by the date of the dispositional hearing, whichever occurs first, and it must be updated as the service needs of the family dictates, but no less frequently than once every six months.

The [CWS Manual of Policies and Procedures \(MPP\) Division 31-206 to 235](#) requires the caseworker to document and update the case plan goal and any changes in the case plan (e.g., treatment services, providers, or placement changes). The case plan must also include a description of the parent, guardian, or Indian custodian's participation with the written case plan in accordance with [CWS MPP Division 31-225](#). Attachment A included with this ACL provides instructions on how to create and update a case plan under the "Other Service Objective" for CalWORKs FR purposes in the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS). All CWS agencies and HHSAs are

strongly encouraged to work together to identify all existing CalWORKs FR case plans that will need to be modified to include CalWORKs cash aid, effective January 1, 2025.

### **CHILD WELFARE SERVICES CASEWORKER BEST PRACTICES**

The function of CalWORKs/CWS cross-system collaboration is to facilitate the process of determining which WTW services are necessary for FR, and to coordinate services to make it easier for a reunifying parent to meet both WTW and CWS requirements. Consolidating activities into a single reunification case plan allows the goals of CWS, CalWORKs, and the reunifying parent to be better aligned.

The caseworker should share the case plan with the CalWORKs worker to coordinate case planning and service delivery for families involved in both systems. The caseworker should assess the family's strengths, needs and goals regarding services needed in the case plan to begin CalWORKs FR. The caseworker should engage the parent, legal guardian, or Indian custodian in their case planning to determine effective services to support behavioral objectives and family reunification. It is crucial for the caseworker to coordinate services and resources with the CalWORKs worker to reduce stress and eliminate contradicting case plans and goals. In addition, the caseworker should work with the CalWORKs worker to monitor the case plan to achieve reunification and identify barriers the family may be experiencing. The caseworker must include the Tribe in these activities in the case of an Indian child. When a child is placed with a non-custodial parent, it is crucial for the caseworker and CalWORKs worker to discuss the potential benefits and drawbacks of recommending CalWORKs FR prior to the disposition hearing. Timely determination and notice to the CalWORKs worker of the need for CalWORKs FR is essential to reduce barriers to reunification, such as limited access to domestic abuse, substance abuse, and mental health services and can prevent the burden of overpayments to the parent if the juvenile court denies FR services. If the family agrees, the caseworker should invite CalWORKs staff and any other individuals identified by the family to regular Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings. CFTs are family-centered teams to support coordinated case planning and decision making to achieve safety and well-being of the child(ren) and their family. CFTs are useful when coordinating reunification case plan services and providing supports during the reunification process.

For more information on CWS and CalWORKs collaboration, visit the [Child Welfare Information Gateway](#) or visit the [Child and Family Policy Institute of California's \(CFPIC\) Linkages Toolkits](#). Please refer to [ACIN I-25-23](#) for information about the updated CalWORKs and Child Welfare Linkages Guidelines and to access the Linkages case plan.

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the CWS case plan, contact the Family Reunification and Pathways to Permanency Unit at [Reunification-Permanency@dss.ca.gov](mailto:Reunification-Permanency@dss.ca.gov). For questions on cash aid, please reach out to CalWORKs Eligibility at [CWEligibilityPolicy@dss.ca.gov](mailto:CWEligibilityPolicy@dss.ca.gov). For questions on WTW, please

reach out to CalWORKs Engagement at [CWEngagementPolicy@dss.ca.gov](mailto:CWEngagementPolicy@dss.ca.gov). For questions on the CWS/CMS or the Training Portal, please reach out to CWS-CARES Service Desk at [servicedesk@cwds.ca.gov](mailto:servicedesk@cwds.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

***Original Document Signed By***

ANGIE SCHWARTZ  
Deputy Director  
Children and Family Services Division

ALEXIS FERNÁNDEZ GARCIA  
Deputy Director  
Family Engagement and Empowerment  
Division

Attachment

cc: All Federally Recognized Tribes  
All Title IV-E Agreement Tribes

## CREATE A CASE PLAN

To create a Case Plan with “Other Service Objective” as Service Objective:

1. Open the case in the Case Management Section, select the + to Create New Case Plan and select proper participants (parent, legal guardian, or Indian custodian) in the Select New Case Plan Participants dialog. Enter the appropriate Case Plan State Date.
2. For the Service Objective, select “Other Service Objective” from the list.
3. Enter the necessary recommendation for the provision of cash aid to support reunification. For example, enter “Child care for trial home visits” and/or “Cash aid for basic needs” in the Additional Description for Participant text box.

Client Services - Case [C, Benjamin] - [Case Plan [In Progress]]

File Edit Search Action Associated Attach/Detach Window Help Toolz

1. Create a New Case

Service Objectives

	Participant	Service Objective Type	Projected Completion Date
1	Benjamin(17)	Other Service Objective	05/20/2025
2	Clyde(47)	Other Service Objective	05/20/2025

Participants

1	C, Clyde H(47)
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Projected Completion Date

☐ Check to select all participants

Date 05/20/2025

Go to View by Participant

Service Objective

Other Service Objective

Service Objective Detail

Other Service Objective (up to 5)

2. Select "Other Service"

Additional Description for Participant

Child care for trial home visits  
Cas Aid for basic needs

3. Enter "Child care for trial home visits" and "Cash aid for basic needs"

Ready Case [C, Benjamin] -> Case Plan [In Progress]

## UPDATE A CASE PLAN

After the plan is approved, you may update the plan with the following steps:

1. To update the Case Plan, open the approved plan by clicking the + to Open Existing Case Plan Notebook and select the In Effect plan.
2. Go to Service Objectives page, select the line of 'Other Service Objective'.
3. In the Progress (for Case Plan Update) textbox, add update to the case plan. For example, enter "CalWORKs FR good cause granted to extend six-month temporary absence to meet reunification plan" to extend services.
4. Click "Ok – Go to Update."

Client Services - Case [C, Benjamin] - [Case Plan [In Effect]]

File Edit Search Action Associated Attach/Detach Window

1. Open Existing Case Plan

ID	CP Participants	Contributing Factors	Strength	Service Objective	Planned Client Services	Case Mgmt Svcs
1	J. Benjamin(17)			Other Service Objective	05/20/2025	
2	C. Clyde H(47)			Other Service Objective	05/20/2025	

2. Go to Service Objectives page

3. Add "Good cause granted to extend six-month temporary absence to meet reunification plan."

Projected Completion Date

☐ Check to select all participants

Date: 05/20/2025

Service Objective: Other Service Objective

Service Objective Detail: Other Service Objective (up to 5)

Progress (for Case Plan Update)

CalWORKs FR good cause granted to extend six-month temporary absence to meet reunification plan

OK - Go to Update

4. Click to update the plan

All Service Objectives Met/Progress recorded Continue with Update

Ready Case [C, Benjamin] -> Case Plan [In Effect]



**JUVENILE PROBATION DEPARTMENT  
CREATE / UPDATE A CASE PLAN (NON-CWD)**

After each six month periodic review hearing, the Probation Officer is required to update the plan with the following steps:

1. To create/update the Non-CWD Page, open the current Foster Care Placement by clicking the Open Existing Placement Notebook and select the current foster care placement. (If the notebook is in read only mode, use the action drop-down menu and select update placement.)
2. Go to the Non-CWD Page.
3. Update the 6 Month Review Date.
4. Update the Last Case Plan Date and modify the Case Plan Goal as needed. For example, select "Return Home" and enter the date when the case plan goal changed.
5. Update the Last Visit Date.

Client Services - NON-CWD Case [Test B] - [Placement]

File Edit Search Action Associated Attach

Child Removal Info | ID | Ongoing Requests | Incidental Payments | End Placement/Episode | Temporary Leave | Non-CWD

**1. Open Existing Foster Care Placement**

**2. Go to the Non-CWD Page**

**3. Enter 6 Mo Review Date**

**4. Enter Last Case Plan Date and select "Case Plan Goal"**

**5. Enter Last Visit Date**

**Hearing Dates**

Petition Date / Vol Place Agree Date Disposition Date Detention Date 6 Mo Review Date PP Hearing Date

Last Case Plan Date Case Plan Goal

09/17/2024

Last Visit Date

Case Plan Goal

01 - Return Home

02 - Adoption

03 - Adoption With Sibling(s)

04 - Legal Guardianship

04 - Maintain minor with Guardian

05 - Self Maintenance

06 - Long Term Foster Care with Relative

07 - Long Term Foster Care with Non-Relative

08 - Remain Home

Name of Person