

July 29, 2021

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER**

The purpose of this All County Welfare Directors Letter (ACWDL) is to provide guidance to County Welfare Departments regarding the provisions of CalWORKs Employment Services in response to the statewide outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19 or novel coronavirus).



KIM JOHNSON  
DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**  
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GAVIN NEWSOM  
GOVERNOR

July 29, 2021

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

FROM: JENNIFER HERNANDEZ, DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT DIVISION

SUBJECT: CALIFORNIA WORK OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY  
TO KIDS (CALWORKS) GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYMENT  
SERVICES (WELFARE-TO-WORK, or WTW) IN RESPONSE TO  
THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19)

REFERENCE: [ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER \(MARCH 13, 2020\)](#); [ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER \(MARCH 30, 2020\)](#); [ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER \(SEPTEMBER 1, 2020\)](#); [ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER \(JULY 22, 2021\)](#); [STATE PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER ORDER](#); [EXECUTIVE ORDER N-08-21](#); [REOPENING CALIFORNIA](#); [WTW 2](#); [ACIN I-60-13](#); [ACL 17-57](#); [THE UNIFORM ELECTRONIC TRANSACTIONS ACT \(UETA\)](#); [ACL 16-119](#); [ASSEMBLY BILL 135](#)

The purpose of this All County Welfare Directors Letter (ACWDL) is to provide continued guidance to County Welfare Departments (CWDs) regarding the provision of WTW Employment Services in response to impacts of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. Counties are encouraged to engage clients to take advantage of the open job market and to offer behavioral health, domestic violence and other valuable services that may assist during the pandemic and offer all flexibilities available.

As long as a [Governor's Declared State of Emergency](#) related to the COVID-19 pandemic is active, all WTW flexibilities and program modifications provided in the [ACWDL dated September 1, 2020](#) will remain in effect. The flexibilities in bold will continue to be available to counties as a permanent change to the program:

Specifically, this includes various operational flexibilities related to:

- WTW documentation and verification practices

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- Virtual Meetings, Appointments, Virtual/Electronic/Telephonic Signatures
- WTW Blanket Good Cause
- Curing WTW Sanctions (in-process or existing) due to Blanket Good Cause
- Expanded Subsidized Employment (ESE) and CalWORKs Work Study subsidies

**Upon expiration** of the Governor's Declared State of Emergency orders, some of the program flexibilities as described in the previous section of this letter will be discontinued. However, CWDs are encouraged to continue utilizing all regular CalWORKs program flexibilities available to clients experiencing ongoing health and economic impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

CalWORKs policy allows for continued relief through the following:

- WTW documentation and verification practices
- Virtual Meetings, Appointments, Virtual/Electronic/Telephonic Signatures
- WTW Good Cause as appropriate, on a case-by-case basis
- Curing WTW Sanctions
- Expanded Subsidized Employment (ESE) and CalWORKs Work Study subsidies
- WTW Exemptions from participation as appropriate, on a case-by-case basis
- Full range of WTW activities and barrier removal services
- Supportive services as appropriate, including Transportation, Ancillary, Childcare services, and Diaper Assistance to enable and support client engagement in WTW activities

### **WTW Good Cause**

The [ACWDL dated March 13, 2020](#) advised that existing statutory and regulatory provisions allow CWDs to implement county-wide policy and procedures to issue temporary "blanket" good cause for suspending the CalWORKs WTW requirements (Manual of Policies and Procedures (MPP) Section 42-713). Once the Governor's Declared State of Emergency orders have ended, "blanket" application of good cause will also expire. Following the end of the Governor's Declared State of Emergency,

counties are advised to continue utilizing good cause and exemptions from WTW participation (MPP Section 42-712) to the extent possible under CalWORKs policy, on a case-by-case basis, to provide relief to clients experiencing health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Virtual Meetings, Appointments, Virtual/Electronic/Telephonic Signatures**

Electronic and telephonic signatures continue to be allowable in county administration of the WTW program, including the [WTW 2 form](#), and will remain an option moving forward. [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 135](#) authorized counties to implement any method of telephonic or electronic signature that is supported by county business practice and technology. The bill requires certain counties to comply with these provisions beginning on or before January 1, 2023 and requires the remaining counties to comply with the provisions beginning on or before January 1, 2024. [ACIN I-60-13](#) and [ACL 17-57](#) provide guidance regarding usage of electronic and telephonic signatures for CalWORKs. While both specifically address the use of electronic and telephonic signatures for application and redetermination/recertification, the guidelines apply broadly to WTW. The Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (UETA) referenced in the ACL applies across state government and allows electronic and telephonic signatures to suffice for any state signature requirement, barring any specific requirement that states otherwise.

Additionally, CWDs are encouraged to consider all available virtual solutions for conducting meetings and appointments with participants. When scheduling appointments with clients, CWDs should provide as much flexibility as possible to meet the needs of participants and facilitate their participation in the program, including allowing virtual meetings. [ACL 16-119](#) details requirements for conducting virtual and telephonic interviews for the CalWORKs program, but also applies broadly to any WTW meetings and appointments.

### **Client Engagement, Noncompliance and Sanctions**

CWDs may begin immediately engaging clients as appropriate in WTW activities in accordance with normal CalWORKs policy, including non-compliance. When engaging clients, CWDs must review for good cause and any applicable exemptions, screen for barriers and offer appropriate supportive services and barrier removal services that will allow CalWORKs clients to participate in WTW. CWDs should make all attempts to identify barriers, provide needed services, apply good cause or grant a WTW exemption when possible before sanctioning the client. After all efforts are exhausted, clients who are required but fail or refuse to participate may be subject to noncompliance, potentially leading to a WTW sanction (MPP Section 42-721.4).

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[Executive Order N-08-21](#) extended the authority for the Department to temporarily suspend pregnancy verification, in-person photo identification, written affirmation prior to receipt of benefits, and interview requirements through September 30, 2021. Guidance can be found in the [ACWDL dated July 22, 2021](#). Note: AB 135 made permanent changes to the pregnancy verification, in-person photo identification and interview requirements. Guidance will be released under separate cover.

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, contact the CalWORKs Engagement Bureau at (916) 654-2137 or [Damien.ladd@dss.ca.gov](mailto:Damien.ladd@dss.ca.gov).