

**Senate Bill 1041 Implementation  
CalWORKs County Review Session Summary**

**Nevada**

**October 27, 2016**

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
Welfare to Work Division  
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**Nevada County**  
Senate Bill (SB) 1041 Implementation  
CalWORKs County Review Session Summary

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## **Introduction**

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### **Purpose of County Review Session**

The purpose of the County Review Session is to obtain information regarding the county's ongoing progress in implementing program changes enacted by Senate Bill (SB) 1041 (Chapter 47, Statutes of 2012) and Assembly Bill (AB) 74 (Chapter 21, Statutes of 2013).

### **Scope of County Review Session**

Specifically, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) will determine the status of program changes related to SB 1041 and AB 74 implementation, including but not limited to:

- Welfare to Work (WTW) participation requirements;
- Post WTW 24-Month Time Clock (24-MTC);
- Training methods provided to staff in order to implement SB 1041 changes;
- Data outcomes related to SB 1041 program changes;
- Family Stabilization (FS) Program;
- Expanded Subsidized Employment (ESE);
- Implementation of Online CalWORKs Appraisal Tool (OCAT)

### **Goals of County Review Session**

The CDSS' goals for the Review Session are to ensure that SB 1041 and AB 74 were implemented correctly by each County Welfare Department (CWD), to gather and share promising practices amongst all CWDs throughout the state, and to determine whether systemic or program issues relating to California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) and the WTW program exist throughout the state. If any issues exist, they will be addressed by the CalWORKs Program Oversight Workgroup.

### **County Review Session General Information**

A County Review Session was performed via conference call on Thursday, October 27, 2016. The County Review Session team included four staff from the CDSS, WTW Division along with Nevada County's CalWORKs Program Manager, Program Supervisor, and two of Nevada County's Employment and Training Counselors.

## **Demographic Area and Economy**

Nevada County is located in the Sierra Nevada mountain range and is a county predominantly made up of rural, small-towns. Based on the Nevada County 2016-2017 Demographic and Statistical Profile, the population is approximately 98,095, and trends show an increase in the population over age 65. The aging population can be attributed to the county's large retirement community and a decline in working families who moved to more urban areas during the recession of 2008-2012. As of January 2016, the unemployment rate has steadily declined to 5.1 percent. In 2014, the county's median household income was \$56,949 and 12.4 percent of the population was living at or below the poverty line.

Due to its location, Leisure and Hospitality is the largest employment sector in the county, but has the lowest average weekly wage. Other large employers are the County, hospitals and skilled nursing facilities that serve the retired community.

## **Implementation Strategies**

Nevada County's implementation strategy for SB 1041 consisted of following the guidelines from various All County Letters (ACLs) and All County Information Notices (ACINs) related to SB 1041. Since initial implementation of the WTW 24-Month Time Clock, Nevada County has provided its staff with ongoing training on WTW Plan development, OCAT, Motivational Interviewing, and Compassion Fatigue. Staff attended the UC Davis Employment Academy in 2016, which featured training in subject areas including but not limited to WTW Plan development, motivational interviewing, and making the most of OCAT interviewing.

At the time of this review session, Nevada County management indicated that they have three CalWORKs offices. The Grass Valley and Nevada City offices serve the western portion of the county, and the Truckee office serves the east. Intake is conducted in the Nevada City and Truckee offices. In February 2016, the Grass Valley Eligibility Office co-located with other services including: Child Support Services, Veteran Services, Child Protective Services, Women Infants and Children (WIC), and its regional Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) American Job Center.

Nevada County is active in examining the best way to engage clients throughout the entire program. Typically, Eligibility staff performs the CalWORKs intake. Once determined eligible for cash aid and aid is granted, clients are scheduled for CalWORKs Connect, the county's customized week-long engagement workshop. It combines orientation with a robust program that introduces clients to community based service providers that the County partners with to deliver personal and job skills development, and supportive, family stabilization and housing services. This program has improved clients' early engagement, understanding of the WTW 24-Month Time Clock and the available services, and ability to develop the most effective WTW Plan.

After attending orientation, the client is assigned to an Employment and Training Counselor, and scheduled for an OCAT interview where the client signs a WTW Plan. Due to the county's relatively low caseload, these orientations are offered once a month. Therefore, in an effort to engage as

many clients as early as possible, the county delivers OCAT interviews first if there is a long wait before the next CalWORKs Connect.

Moving forward, Nevada County will divide caseloads based on client goals and staff's strength. The Employment and Training Counselors will divide the cases in four focus areas: early engagement and OCAT, Housing Support Program and Family Stabilization, employable and education focused clients, and sanctioned and exempt cases.

**Some of Nevada's Key Successes Include:**

- Enthusiasm is demonstrated and shared by the Program Manager and Employment and Training staff.
- Nevada County collaborates with its educational partners to connect clients to robust work-study and Family Stabilization programs.
- Nevada County partners with the American Job Center to provide clients with needed job skill training.
- With the implementation of SB 1041, Nevada County created CalWORKs Connect, a week-long orientation program, to introduce CalWORKs participants to the available services.
- Flexibility in the engagement process has allowed for the County to be creative in reaching out to participants and engaging them early on.
- Nevada County has partnered with several organizations to address a lack of affordable housing in the county. This includes temporary housing for the homeless, a domestic abuse shelter, and transitional substance abuse housing.

**Acknowledgments**

The CDSS thanks the Nevada County Health and Human Services Agency for participating in this teleconference session. The CDSS appreciates the open collaboration with CWD staff to ensure the continued success of the CalWORKs program.

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## Background and Data

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### Nevada at-a-glance

Total Caseload .....	<b>483</b>
(Source: CalWORKs Cash Grant Caseload Movement Report [CA 237 CW] Line Item <b>8a</b> -August 2016)	
WTW Enrollees .....	<b>181</b>
(Source: CalWORKs WTW Monthly Activity Report [WTW 25/25A] Line Item 1- August 2016)	
Mandatory Participants (enrollees + sanctioned + non-compliance) .....	<b>300</b>
(Source: CalWORKs WTW Monthly Activity Report [WTW 25/25A] Line Item 1, 3A, and 31- August 2016)	
Reengagement Plan Received .....	<b>Yes</b>
Beginning Date of Reengagement .....	<b>January 2013</b>
Consortium System .....	<b>C-IV</b>

### Data/Statistics available at time of teleconference call:

- 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 totaled: **Unknown**
- 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 totaled: **Unknown**
- Sanctions that were cured as a result of SB 1041 totaled: **Unknown**
- Former short-term young child exempt clients (Assembly Bill [AB] X4 4) that have been reengaged totaled: **20**
- WTW plans that have changed as a result of SB 1041 implementation totaled: **Unknown**
- Clients that have used the new once in a lifetime young child exemption totaled: **309**

### Summary of Documents provided by Nevada County for teleconference call:

- Nevada County Organization Chart: Document display of staff members within the Nevada County Office (Employment and Eligibility staff).
- AB 74 County Welfare Department FS Plan: The FS plan describes Nevada County's plan for implementing its FS program. (Ex: How clients will be informed of the program, how clients will be able to request to participate, how Nevada County will determine eligibility for clients, etc.)
- AB 74 County Welfare Department ESE Plan: The ESE plan details Nevada County's plan for implementing its ESE program. (Ex: The types of employer placements, how counties will link clients to employers, criteria for participation, etc.)
- Reference items included: Example WTW exemption letter, OCAT Processing Guide, FS Flyer, Nevada County Referral Contact List.

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## County Administrator and Caseworker Dialogue

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The CDSS County Review Team used updated county administrator and caseworker interview tools following those released in ACIN I-42-13 regarding SB 1041 implementation. These tools were provided to and completed by a Nevada County administrator and caseworker in advance of the County Review Teleconference. During the teleconference, the interview panel discussed responses to the interview tools in greater detail.

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

### **Transitioning Clients**

Initially, Nevada County had challenges in implementing SB 1041. County staff turnover made it difficult to understand and implement SB 1041, which affected how well clients understood CalWORKs' requirements and services. Comprehension and utilization of the WTW 24-Month Time Clock has improved since staff received training at the UC Davis Employment Academy. The County expressed that the transition and implementation of SB 1041 would have been smoother if State level training had been provided at the beginning.

Previous leadership discouraged the use of the WTW 24 Month Time Clock, due to the confusion surrounding it. However, under the new leadership this has changed, and now the WTW 24-Month Time Clock is being applied when it is appropriate and beneficial for the client. Nevada County believes that creating a WTW plan should be a collaborative process, and now works with the client upfront to determine if use of the WTW 24-Month Time Clock would be beneficial. Since the increased utilization of the WTW 24-Month Time Clock, there has been an increase in clients engaged in educational, Family Stabilization and behavioral health activities.

### **Clients who failed to attend SB 1041 appointments**

Nevada County places clients who miss appointments, or do not make satisfactory progress in an activity, in non-compliance for a month. If the client continues to be nonresponsive, the client is sanctioned the following month.

### **New Young Child Exemption**

At the time of the teleconference call, Nevada County noted 309 clients who utilized their once in a lifetime exemption, of which 92 are currently active.

### **Post WTW 24- Month Time Clock**

At the time of the County Review Session, two clients in Nevada County had exhausted their WTW 24-Month Time Clock, but no extensions have been granted. However, if an extension is requested, the County will assess the client's present needs and activities to determine if it should be granted. When transitioning clients from the WTW 24-Month Time Clock to post 24-Month Time Clock requirements, Nevada County meets with the client, reassesses the client's current needs and signs a new WTW Plan.

The County discussed that tracking clients WTW 24-Month Time Clock can be confusing and time consuming within the C-IV system. The County manually reviews how C-IV has counted months by comparing it to a client's activities and hours, but does not do so consistently.

## **Family Stabilization (FS)**

Nevada County's staff feels that FS is an important program to ensure that clients are receiving the services they need to become self-sufficient. The county contracts with the county's Superintendent of Schools' three Family Resource Centers (FRC) to facilitate the FS program. Clients are informed about FS during CalWORKs Connect and their OCAT Appraisal Summary Recommendations (ASR) review. County staff refers clients to FS services, and the FRCs provide case managers. This partnership allows FS clients to receive optimal case management from caseworkers who have significantly smaller caseloads.

Services provided through FS include credit repair, driver license reinstatement, children's behavioral health issues, domestic violence and housing issues. Eighty percent of Nevada County's FS funds go to direct services, with the remaining twenty percent dedicated to case management. However, Nevada County stated that even with supplementing their FS allocation with single allocation funds, the available funding and services does not meet the demand. As a result, clients are placed on a wait list. When an opening arises, Employment and Training Counselors assess clients on the wait list and triage by current need and urgency to decide who to refer into the opening.

## **Expanded Subsidized Employment (ESE)**

Nevada County contracts with Nevada County Works! to administer its ESE program. The program provides soft skills training, and attempts to place clients with employers who understand the expectation to hire the subsidized employee upon program completion. The County has had the most success in placing clients in manufacturing jobs, and estimates 50 percent of all ESE participants have transitioned to unsubsidized jobs.

## **Child Care Services**

Nevada County's child care services are contracted out to Sierra Nevada Children's Services (SNCS), which is located near the Sierra College Campus in Grass Valley. Employment and Training counselors send a referral to SNCS, who in turn works with the client to find a childcare provider.

Nevada County indicates that there has been a decrease of child care services within the last two years. Some potential reasons for this decline could be that there was an increase in two-parent cases, and that there is insufficient childcare available for young children, and during evenings and weekends. The later reason is problematic as the hospitality sector, which is the largest employer in Nevada County, often requires employees to work evening and weekend hours.

## **OCAT Implementation**

Since implementation in October 2015, Employment and Training Counselors reserve time every week to conduct OCAT interviews. To help save time, Employment and Training Counselors enter in all demographic and work history information available before the interview. The County

recently hired a part-time social worker who will be available to provide clients support during OCAT interviews.

The time commitment to conduct OCAT interviews proves to be a challenge in scheduling appointments and getting clients to show up. Nevada County staff is concerned that this will ultimately impact their ability to engage clients. Therefore, the County tries to accommodate the client as much as possible and sometimes schedules OCAT appointments before orientation, or encourages clients to contact service providers before the OCAT interview.

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## **Conclusion**

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### **Successes**

Nevada County's leadership and commitment to building upon the foundation of existing CalWORKs services contributed significantly to the successful implementation of SB 1041 requirements within the county. The County took on the complexity and implementation of SB 1041 by providing staff with ongoing training around how to effectively communicate with and serve clients utilizing the WTW 24-Month Time Clock.

In addition to providing training, Nevada County continues to explore how to best implement the new casework and programming which arose from SB 1041 and AB 74. The recent shift towards a strength-based, goal-oriented division of caseloads, demonstrates that the County is continuously looking for ways to increase efficiency and effectiveness in their case management as the CalWORKs program expands and becomes more complex.

One of the innovative programmatic responses to SB 1041 is the robust CalWORKs Connect program that Nevada County created. The program has proven to be a successful method of introducing clients to both the requirements and services available through WTW. The week-long program combines self-discovery workshops with informational sessions to excite and empower clients to be active participants in their CalWORKs program.

Nevada County's flexibility in its early engagement process has maximized the number of engaged clients. The innovative CalWORKs Connect program and orientation only occur once a month due to Nevada County's small caseload. However, the County has acknowledged it is detrimental for a client to wait a couple weeks before the initial engagement process. In allowing some clients to have their OCAT appointment before attending orientation, Nevada County prevents stagnation in engagement, and has even found that it helps demystify OCAT through clients' word of mouth.

Nevada County has also built successful partnerships with local entities and community organizations to provide a range of services effectively and efficiently. The County hosts semi-annual "all partners" meetings in order to provide program updates, and encourage partner entities to build connections amongst themselves.



Nevada County works closely with the Nevada County Works! program. The program offers soft skills classes to clients in job readiness or search activities two times per day over several weeks.

The County's partnership with the Superintendent of Schools' FRCs has also been successful. FRCs provide case managers who work closely with clients to address employment barriers in the family through FS services.

Nevada County has a strong work-study program through its partnership with Sierra College, who funds 75 percent of the wages for CalWORKs work-study participants. Students are placed in a variety of campus jobs including the Student Services and Financial Aid offices.

## **Challenges**

During the teleconference call, Nevada County mentioned that childcare availability is a major challenge in their CalWORKs program. Currently there are very few evening or weekend childcare providers. This makes it hard for CalWORKs clients to work within the sectors that are most readily accessible to them but require flexible schedules: nursing facilities and hospitality. Due to the shortage of providers and high demand for childcare, many do not accept children on a part-time basis. The County even mentioned that some CalWORKs clients had to turn down jobs because they did not have adequate childcare.

Connecting the remote areas of Nevada County to employment and services proves to be another challenge. There are two local bus systems that connect the western and eastern sides of Nevada County. However, the bus routes only follow the main arteries of the County, meaning people living in remote areas have challenges accessing them. In addition to limited bus routes, the routes that do exist have limited schedules, limiting the flexibility of public transit users.

Another transportation-related challenge that Nevada County staff noted was the lack of driver licenses amongst their clients. Some CalWORKs clients have had their licenses revoked, and others, in particular young women, never received a license. In order to address this challenge, the County emphasizes aiding clients to obtain their licenses through the Family Stabilization program.

Nevada County residents have limited access to post-secondary educational resources. Sierra College has campuses in Grass Valley and Truckee, but not many classes are offered at these campuses. Many clients travel to the Rocklin campus to take their necessary classes. To help mediate this challenge, the County's staff works closely with Sierra College staff to coordinate case plans and connect their clients to available resources.

Lastly, the housing market is competitive in Nevada County due to having a strong second-home market. As a result, many landlords are not interested in participating in housing programs for low-income families. Nevada County will house families in hotels if clients are making progress in their WTW plan. However, it is not stable, permanent housing for the families, and it is not economically sustainable for the County. However, the County started to receive Housing Support Program (HSP) funds in 2015, and has since permanently housed almost 20 families. The County has had some success in housing CalWORKs families through partnerships with the Salvation Army,

domestic violence and substance abuse organizations, and even some individual landlords. There are a handful of landlords that will call the County to notify staff that they have a vacancy. Nevada County stated that they are on track to outspend their 2016-17 HSP allocation, and that they intend to reapply for HSP funds for 2017.

### **Key Recommendations**

As Nevada County continues to advance SB 1041 changes, the county should continue to attend trainings and connect with nearby counties for assistance on tracking clients' WTW 24-Month Time Clock, outreaching to clients, and providing transportation options. CDSS will continue to provide support and technical assistance when possible.

In order to continue its progress in addressing clients' housing needs, Nevada County is strongly encouraged to once again apply for Housing Support Program funds in 2017 if funding remains available and new applications are accepted.

Nevada County is also encouraged to continue its collaborative relationships and partnerships with other agencies, local organizations, and educational institutions as a means to best serve clients and leverage local and regional resources.

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### **Contact**

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