

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

San Mateo County

Visit Date: May 19, 2014

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

San Mateo 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 former short-term young child exempt population (Assembly Bill [AB] 4X 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 San Mateo County on Monday, May 19, 2014 at the San Mateo County Human Services Agency Administrative Office in Belmont, CA. The field monitoring visit team included a manager and two staff from the CDSS, Welfare to Work Division, CalWORKs Employment and Eligibility Branch along with San Mateo County's Agency Director, WTW program manager, and a WTW program policy analyst. The field monitoring visit team also spoke with two San Mateo County caseworkers (Employment Services Specialists). The field monitoring visit consisted of a kick-off meeting, close-out meeting, staff interviews, and case management observations with county staff.

Implementation Strategies

Beginning in the fall of 2012, San Mateo County developed a series of internal memorandums and informational handouts, based on formal guidance from CDSS, which were then issued to staff. San Mateo County also formed a workgroup to discuss and understand the changes brought by SB 1041 and to implement the new program changes at each of San Mateo County's regional offices. Due to the relatively small number of case managers in San Mateo County (11), county leadership was able to work directly with line staff to distribute policy change information. Formal training on the SB 1041 changes was provided to eligibility workers and WTW staff in early January 2013.

Some of San Mateo County key successes included:

- Strong leadership which set the foundation for an effective SB 1041 implementation process.
- Emphasis on innovation with various technology based methods to further connect and communicate with clients (e.g. texting, emails, tablet utilization in rural areas, etc.).
- Attendance and participation at monthly Bay Area Social Service Alliance of Directors meetings to share and discuss promising practices, challenges, and collaborate on strategies for better serving clients.
- The Employment Improvement Program (EIP), a transitional employment model for clients.
- Established and skillful knowledge base among staff, due to low turnover, staff passion for the program, and an enjoyable work environment.
- Effective communication process between staff and management which included quarterly managers meetings, policy workgroups, quarterly supervisory meetings and utilization of monthly activity reports.

Key Recommendations

San Mateo should consider separating appraisals for two-parent families. Especially with the upcoming implementation of the Online CalWORKs Appraisal Tool (OCAT), which will require individuals to be appraised separately. A reevaluation of the home visit program may provide additional opportunities to engage clients that may be in danger of entering non-compliance or sanction status. In addition, enhancing overall procedures to address long term sanction cases is highly recommended by the CDSS.

Acknowledgments

The CDSS thanks the San Mateo County Human Services Agency 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

San Mateo at-a-glance

Total Caseload	2,354
<small>(Source: CalWORKs Cash Grant Caseload Movement Report CA 237 CW Line Item 8a-March 2014)</small>	
WTW Enrollees	791
<small>(Source: CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Monthly Activity Report WTW 25/25A Line Item 1-March 2014)</small>	
Mandatory Participants (enrollees + sanctioned + non-compliance)	994
<small>(Source: CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Monthly Activity Report WTW 25/25A Line Items 1, 3A, and 31-March 2014)</small>	
Reengagement Plan Received	Yes
Beginning Date of Reengagement	October 2013
Consortium System	CalWIN

Data/Statistics Available at Time of Field Monitoring Visit:

- 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:
As of September 2013, all 767 existing participants had received a comprehensive discussion.
- 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:
As of September 2013, all 767 existing participants had received a comprehensive discussion.
- Sanctions that were cured as a result of SB 1041: **0**
- Former short-term young child exempt clients (AB X4 4) that have been reengaged: **92**
- WTW plans that have changed as a result of SB 1041 implementation: **73**
- Clients that have used the new once in a lifetime young child exemption: **81**
- Other statistics that the county is keeping related to SB 1041 implementation:
Monthly tracking of the reengagement population to review how many clients had begun the reengagement process.

Summary of Documents provided by San Mateo County:

- Instructional announcements provided by county management 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 a list of training strategies, materials available on-line, and materials distributed during staff meetings.
- San Mateo County's Reengagement Sequencing Plan.

County Administrator and Caseworker Interviews

The CDSS field monitoring visit team used the county administrator and caseworker interview tools released in All County Information Notice I-42-13 to interview the county administrator and Employment Services Specialists in-person regarding SB 1041 implementation. The tools were provided to the county administrator and Employment Services Specialists in advance of the visit. The administrator interview panel consisted of three CDSS staff with one county administrator. The Employment Services Specialist interviews were conducted by two teams of CDSS staff members (one team of two CDSS staff members, and one team of a single CDSS staff member) with each team interviewing one Employment Services Specialist.

Summary of Observations

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

Transitioning clients regardless of time on aid

San Mateo County mailed the CW 2205 (*New Rules for CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Activities*) form to 767 clients, regardless of time remaining on each client's CalWORKs 48-month time limit. This was followed by a county form (C-680 - *WTW Appointment Letter, New Rules for CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Activities*) to schedule an appointment. San Mateo County began comprehensive discussions with clients in June of 2013. The comprehensive discussions for all clients were completed by September 30, 2014. In general, San Mateo County had a large exempt population, and a small number of participating clients who chose to modify their plans to reflect the new requirements, such as lower hourly requirements.

Clients who failed to attend SB 1041 appointments

San Mateo County practice when a client was unresponsive to the SB 1041 engagement was to have a comprehensive discussion with the client at his or her next regularly scheduled appointment. During the implementation of SB 1041, this additional engagement period did not exceed more than three months.

New Young Child Exemption

San Mateo County reported as of May of 2014, that 81 individuals had opted to utilize the new young child exemption.

Clients with Good Cause for Lack of Supportive Services

Following the passage of AB X4 4, San Mateo County granted good cause for lack of supportive services to all WTW participants. All participating individuals were treated as volunteers moving forward. San Mateo County saw a significant drop in participation during this period. In 2013, San Mateo County began to reengage individuals who were given this short term good cause exemption, and did so while rebuilding its WTW program.

The New WTW Plan Activity Assignment Form (WTW 2)

San Mateo County began using the new WTW 2 form effective January 1, 2013. At the time of this visit, this county chose to use the form on the CDSS website, instead of utilizing a version available through its consortia systems.

General Comments

The Employment Services Specialists interviewed stated that the county had no plans to use the CalWIN version of the WTW 2 at the time of the interview. Instead, they used the PDF documents from the CDSS website, and then entered the plan information into CalWIN. The Employment Services Specialists found the new WTW 2 to be self-explanatory and had an easier time going over the form with clients than prior versions, though some noted that certain portions of the form were repetitive. The Employment Services Specialists expressed that client feedback varied regarding their understanding of the WTW 2, with some clients having a good understanding of the information noted on the WTW 2 and others had trouble understanding the form.

Reengagement Process

San Mateo County's reengagement process officially began on October 1, 2013, and was completed in December of 2014. The CW 2206 (*Young Child Exemption Ends December 31, 2012 - New Rules for CalWORKs Welfare-To-Work Activities*) form was sent as a mass mailer on October 29, 2013 to all AB X4 4 short-term exempt individuals. Appointment letters went out at least 30 days prior to reengagement evaluation appointments.

San Mateo County's Reengagement Sequencing Plan was as follows:

- **October 1, 2013** - Individuals with 36 to 48 months remaining on aid.
- **January 1, 2014** - Individuals with 23 to 35 months remaining on aid.
- **April 1, 2014** - Individuals with 10 to 22 months left on aid.
- **August 1, 2014** - Individuals with 9 months or less left on aid.

The reengagement process for San Mateo County included the following:

- Send a CW 2206 at least 60 days prior to reengagement evaluation appointment;
- Case file review; and
- Send a reengagement evaluation appointment letter at least 30 days prior to reengagement evaluation appointment and include the CW 2186A (*CalWORKs Exemption Request Form*) and a copy of CW 2206.

The county also provided additional reminders and made a third contact via a telephone call prior to the reengagement evaluation appointment. This call included a reminder to the client of the upcoming appointment and an offer (and issuance) of necessary supportive services to attend the appointment. Employment Services Specialists were required to document the telephone call in case file and allow one rescheduling opportunity for those clients that were not able to attend the appointment.

During each reengagement client's appointment, he or she was provided with a general description of supportive services available, program requirements and flexibility under SB 1041. Employment Services Specialists would determine a client's status and needs and whether another WTW exemption applied. Additionally, clients were informed of their remaining time on aid and assigned appropriate WTW activities that included the identification of barriers.

AB X4 4 short term exempt clients who were volunteering in the WTW program on December 31, 2013 were allowed to continue volunteering until they were reengaged. AB X4 4 short term clients requesting to volunteer after January 1, 2013 were not allowed to volunteer. These clients were informed that if they chose to participate prior to the reengagement sequencing plan, their CalWORKs 48-month time limit, unless meeting a clock stopper reason, would begin to tick on the first of the following month from the date a new or amended WTW plan was signed. These clients were offered the option to either reengage early or wait until their reengagement prioritization. Clients who chose to reengage early followed the reengagement process steps. Clients were allowed to waive the 60 day informing period. In addition, a sworn statement to document the waiver was obtained and kept in the case file.

Exempt volunteering clients who were already fully meeting the new participation requirements were not required to attend the in person reengagement evaluation appointment. Instead, the telephone contact after initial noticing served as their reengagement evaluation and would include the required SB 1041 discussion points.

Implementation Strategies

In the fall of 2012, San Mateo County leadership informed CalWORKs eligibility and employment services staff about the changes that would take effect January 1, 2013. Internal memorandums and informational handouts were issued to staff once formal guidance was provided by CDSS in the form of All County Letters and All County Information Notices. San Mateo County also formed a work group consisting of the CalWORKs Employment Services Program Manager, CalWORKs and WTW Program Policy Analyst, CalWORKs Employment Services Supervisors, and a Systems Analyst to assist with the CalWIN data reporting component. This workgroup met to discuss and understand the changes brought by SB 1041 and to implement the new program changes at each of San Mateo County's regional offices. Because of the relatively small number of Employment Services Specialists in San Mateo County (11), county leadership was able to work directly with line staff to distribute policy change information.

Training on the SB 1041 changes was provided to all CalWORKs staff throughout the county in early January 2013 to explain program changes. This training allowed staff to work together on case scenarios and provided additional details on the WTW program changes.

General Comments

The county developed their own training material, but did incorporate some information from CDSS's Training Aid. Staff were provided various training materials to be utilized as reference guides and desk manuals.

Case Reviews

The CDSS field monitoring visit team reviewed five cases selected by the CWD in advance of the visit. The purpose of this component of the visit was to review how SB 1041 program changes were integrated into case management, understand how SB 1041 policies were operationalized by the county's caseworkers, and better comprehend case management within the 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 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 former short-term young child exemption (AB X4 4) population, and is either in the process of or has been reengaged.

General Comments

San Mateo County uses the CalWIN case management system. The cases shared at this visit had all received the appropriate notices and applicable benefits and supportive services. This included the issuance of the CW 2205 and CW 2208 (Your Welfare-to-Work 24-Month Time Clock) when applicable in addition to the new WTW 2. At the time of the reviews, many clients were still in the process of reengagement, and had not returned to full WTW participation. In the case of the client who was sanctioned, the review determined that the client was able to meet the new, lower hourly requirements, and a new plan was developed to bring the client into compliance. The clients in the case files who were participating did not show any significant plan changes as a result of SB 1041.

Conclusion

Successes

San Mateo County demonstrates a high level of communication between leadership and staff. County leadership has also reached out to other bay area counties to share and network to achieve common goals and objectives to better serve its clients. This partnership, the Bay Area Social Service Alliance of Directors, meets monthly to share and discuss promising practices, challenges and to network on strategies for county improvements. Within the county, there is management enthusiasm and leadership which set the stage for an effective SB 1041 implementation process.

County leadership and staff have established many paths of communication which all contribute to effective evaluation of program results and processes. San Mateo County has embraced technological innovations, such as information kiosks in the offices, offering tablets to participants, enabling access to services in remote areas, and using texting as an alternative means to provide information to clients. Overall, San Mateo County has had a low staff turnover rate, resulting in a high store of institutional knowledge and operational stability within its program.

Challenges

San Mateo had extensively utilized the short term exemption from the CalWORKs 48-month time limit for good cause for lack of supportive services. The county gave nearly all WTW client's this exemption, which essentially created an all-volunteer CalWORKs program. As a result, participation rates in the years immediately preceding SB 1041 implementation were low.

Directly prior to SB 1041 implementation, San Mateo County began rebuilding its WTW program, moving away from the 'all-volunteer' model. This was a challenging process and considering that many clients directly before SB 1041 implementation had either not been participating at all or had been only partially participating as volunteers, the timing of the implementation of SB 1041 compounded this challenge. San Mateo County leadership used the opportunity presented by SB 1041 to rebuild its WTW Program, and implement a number of new strategies.

For clients, San Mateo County's geography often presents challenges to transportation. California Highway 101 provides the only significant north/south corridor within the county, and many schools and business are located far from available public transportation. Additionally, the county recognizes the need to address its large long-term sanction population, and hopes to use the new Family Stabilization Program to improve its outreach and home visiting policies.

Key Recommendations

San Mateo should consider separating appraisals for two-parent families. Especially with the upcoming implementation of the OCAT tool, which will require individuals to be appraised separately. This would allow the county to better customize the WTW experience according to individual needs, and assist in the identification of barriers to self-sufficiency that may be concealed in joint appraisals.

A reevaluation of the home visiting program may provide additional opportunities to engage clients that may be in danger of entering non-compliance or sanction status. San Mateo County acknowledged that its home visiting program did not see much success in prior incarnations, and is looking forward to rebuilding it using the Family Stabilization Program, as well as engaging community based organizations to perform some visits as an alternative to county agency staff. Following the visit, the county reported some successes in the engagement of sanctioned individuals as a result of implementing its Family Stabilization Program, and would continue to monitor the results.

The CDSS also recommends that San Mateo County pay close attention to the data which is submitted through their consortia to the CDSS for the monthly CalWORKs Cash Grant Caseload

Movement Reports (CA 237 CW), and CalWORKs WTW Monthly Activity Reports for All (Other) Families and Two Parent Families (WTW 25/25A). These sources are relied upon by CDSS to track and measure program progress.

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