

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

Santa Cruz County

Visit Date: September 9, 2014

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

Santa Cruz 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

The one-day field monitoring visit was performed in Santa Cruz County on Tuesday, September 9, 2014 at the Employment and Benefits Customer Service Center in Watsonville, CA. The field monitoring visit team included two managers and a staff member from the CDSS, Welfare to Work Division, CalWORKs Employment and Eligibility Branch along with Santa Cruz County's Employment & Benefit Services Division Director, Employment Services Program Manager, CalWORKs/WTW Program Specialist and two caseworkers. 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, Santa Cruz County developed a series of policies to rapidly implement SB 1041. The county used the formal guidance provided by CDSS to develop a series of staff trainings in the SB 1041 changes, and the reengagement process. Materials and training were distributed to staff at all levels, and refresher trainings were held in December of 2013 to ensure that implementation was complete.

Some of Santa Cruz County's key successes included:

- Structuring programs and work areas to emphasize a positive experience for WTW clients.
- Focus on work skills development, including the Fast Track to Work program with Cabrillo College and funding of work study slots for clients in education programs.
- In-depth exploration of client needs when developing WTW plans.
- Close relationship with local education providers.
- Rapid implementation of SB 1041, including reengagement and comprehensive discussions.

Key Recommendations

Santa Cruz County should improve outreach to sanctioned clients to encourage a return to WTW participation. In addition, the county should develop tools to aid caseworkers in developing short and long-term goals with clients. Finally, Santa Cruz County should invest in additional training on the WTW 2 (*WTW Plan Activity Assignment* form) and the WTW 24-Month Time Clock, which continues to generate confusion and frustration amongst workers and clients.

Acknowledgments

The CDSS thanks Santa Cruz County Human Services Department for hosting the 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

Santa Cruz at-a-glance

Total Caseload.....	1,898
<small>(Source: CalWORKs Cash Grant Caseload Movement Report CA 237 CW Line Item 8a, total across categories-July 2014)</small>	
WTW Enrollees.....	609
<small>(Source: CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Monthly Activity Report WTW 25/25A Line Item 1-July 2014)</small>	
Mandatory Participants (enrollees + sanctioned + non-compliance).....	752
<small>(Source: CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Monthly Activity Report WTW 25/25A Line Items 1, 3A, and 31-July 2014)</small>	
Reengagement Plan Received.....	Yes
Beginning Date of Reengagement.....	January 1, 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: **222**
- 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: **75**
- Sanctions that were cured as a result of SB 1041: **0**
- Former short-term young child exempt clients (Assembly Bill [AB] X4 4) that have been reengaged: **301**
- 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: **384**
- Other statistics that the county is keeping related to SB 1041 implementation: **None**

Summary of Documents provided by Santa Cruz County:

- Instructional announcements provided by the county to its 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.
- Santa Cruz 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 case workers in-person regarding SB 1041 implementation. The tool was provided to the county administrators and caseworkers in advance of the visit. The administrator interview panel consisted of four CDSS staff with three county administrators. The caseworker interviews were conducted by two CDSS staff members paired up with one caseworker.

Summary of Observations

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

Transitioning clients regardless of time on aid

Santa Cruz County mailed the CW 2205 (*New Rules for CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Activities*) form to 297 clients, regardless of time remaining on each client's CalWORKs 48-month time limit. Clients were then contacted by phone or email, and those wishing to modify their WTW plan were scheduled for an in-person appointment. Santa Cruz County began comprehensive discussions with clients in February of 2013. Some clients were unable to be brought in during the three months allotted to county staff for this process, but all were completed shortly after.

Clients who failed to attend SB 1041 appointments:

Clients meeting new participation requirements who failed to attend their scheduled SB 1041 appointment were contacted a minimum of three times by their case workers. The form of this contact varied depending on the individual case worker (phone, email, or conventional mail) and the contact was documented in the individual client's case file.

General Comments

In general, Santa Cruz County's administration at the time of the SB 1041 implementation placed a higher priority on Reengagement than on the comprehensive discussions. In addition, case workers observed that most employed clients chose not to reduce hours in their WTW plans following the comprehensive discussions.

New Young Child Exemption

There were a significant number of cases that chose to utilize the new young child exemption. Santa Cruz County reported during the time of this visit 384 clients to date had been granted the new young child exemption.

The new WTW Activity Assignment Plan Form (WTW 2)

The new WTW 2 form was made available on the Santa Cruz County intranet forms library and county staff began its use effective January 1, 2013. Case workers were encouraged to use the shelf stock of the new WTW 2 form, or the electronic version from the CDSS website, until the CalWIN version could be fully automated.

General Comments

The caseworkers interviewed felt that the WTW 2 was effective as a guide during a client's SB 1041 discussion. It allowed the participant to have a visual on the different options they could select from. Students especially found it useful as a guide for how their plan would be treated as their activities changed between semesters and during breaks. However, caseworkers also noted that some clients were overwhelmed by the length of the new WTW 2.

Reengagement Process

Santa Cruz County's reengagement process officially began on January 1, 2013. The CW 2206 (*Young Child Exemption Ends December 31, 2012 New Rules For CalWORKs WTW Activities*) mass mailer was sent beginning December 1, 2012, to all AB X4 4 short-term exempt individuals. Appointment letters went out at least 30 days prior to reengagement evaluation appointments. The target completion date for reengagement was April 30, 2013.

Santa Cruz County's Sequencing Plan was as follows:

- **January 1, 2013**-Participants that were timing out of CalWORKs within six months and were eligible for the new young child exemption.
- **February 1, 2013**-Participants with two children under the age of six.
- **March 1, 2013**-Participants with a child under the age of two.

The reengagement process for Santa Cruz County included the following:

- CW 2206 issued at least 60 days prior to reengagement evaluation appointment;
- Case file review; and
- Reengagement evaluation appointment letter issued at least 30 days prior to reengagement evaluation appointment including a 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 each client's 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. Case workers were required to document the telephone call in the 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. Case workers would determine a client's status, needs, and whether another WTW exemption may apply. Additionally, clients were informed of their remaining time of 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, 2012 were allowed to continue volunteering until they were reengaged. No clients in Santa Cruz County requested to volunteer after January 1, 2013, due to the aggressive reengagement sequencing plan, and no clients requested early reengagement.

Implementation Strategies

Santa Cruz County implemented SB 1041 through a number of methods. Strategies included formal classroom training, email guidance and directives, periodic “Employment Services Updates” sent to staff by the Employment Services Program Manager, and reviews of All County Letters (ACLs) and discussions of the changes during unit meetings. The initial classroom training was provided in March of 2013, with a refresher training conducted in December of 2013. In addition, the Employment Services Program Manager and CalWORKs/WTW Analyst conducted a series of presentations to CalWORKs eligibility and employment services staff regarding the new young child exemption, and how clients should be informed of their choices before opting to take the once-in-a-lifetime exemption.

General Comments

The county used the CDSS’s Training Aid, issued by ACIN I-08-13, to develop the training presented by the county staff development trainer. A variety of materials were distributed to staff, while refresher trainings, unit meeting discussions, and case reviews were used to ensure comprehension of the new rules.

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

Santa Cruz 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 review, case two, the client that had been exempt under the short term young child exemption, had been reengaged after several missed appointments. Two clients, who had been participating or sanctioned before January 1, 2013, left aid June 30, 2013. The client who had been participating left aid due to income, while the sanctioned individual left the county shortly after completing a new WTW plan.

Conclusion

Successes

Santa Cruz County has focused on the client experience in the CalWORKs program. Effort was directed to the layout of the county offices, to ensure a positive experience even in the county waiting areas and interview rooms. This client focus extends to various county programs, such as the Fast Track to Work program with Cabrillo College, and career exploration workshops.

The County quickly implemented SB 1041 in the first half of 2013. This rapid implementation of the comprehensive discussions and reengagement allowed clients to quickly take advantage of the increased flexibility of the WTW 24-Month Time Clock, and ensured that individuals who were exempt prior to December 31, 2012, were able to immediately engage in activities.

Santa Cruz County also demonstrated a close relationship with the education providers. Programs such as Fast Track to Work aid clients in developing job skills. In addition, this relationship also extends to client services, such as the county offering rides to clients to Capitola for learning disability evaluations.

Challenges

Santa Cruz County found that their greatest challenge was the implementation of such significant changes to the program in such a short amount of time. Some compressive discussions were delayed relative to the county's original timetable for completion, but all were completed in advance of the time limit described in ACL 12-67.

The county also acknowledged that contact with sanctioned and long term exempt populations was limited. Most clients in these categories were not contacted outside of the annual reporting and redetermination cycle. While sanction outreach is performed at redetermination, CDSS suggested that additional contact may improve the participation rate.

Key Recommendations

Santa Cruz County should improve outreach to sanctioned clients to encourage a return to WTW participation. The county was encouraged to reach out to other counties that have successful home visit programs to develop better outreach for those populations.

In addition, the county should develop tools to aid caseworkers in developing short and long-term goals with clients. This will allow county staff to better match client needs and interests with available training and labor market needs.

Finally, Santa Cruz County should expand its current training programs to include additional training on the WTW 2 and the WTW 24-Month Time Clock. Both areas, while implemented in the county, were confusing to case workers and clients, and the county would benefit from additional clarity.

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