

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

Solano County

Visit Date: November 13, 2013

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

Solano 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] X44 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 visit was performed in Solano County on Wednesday, November 13, 2013, at the Solano County Health and Social Services Department Agency in Fairfield, CA. The field visit team included four CDSS staff along with the counties Eligibility and Employment Services Manager, WTW Program Specialist, Administrator and the Health and Social Services Department Deputy Director. The field visit consisted of a kick-off meeting, close-out meeting, staff interviews, and case management observations with county staff.

Implementation Strategies

Solano County utilized a variety of strategies for the implementation of SB 1041. These strategies included discussions at the county's WTW Supervisor meetings, staff team meetings, Division Management Team Meetings, and Manager Meetings. In addition to the presentations/trainings, staff were provided information through Department Memorandums, emails from supervisors and the use of a questions and answers (Q&A) Department Memorandums. Information was issued to

staff beginning December 7, 2012, and continued throughout the year. The presentations/training and additional information were provided to all staff that work with CalWORKs clients.

Solano County conducted the SB 1041 CalWORKs and Welfare-to-Work Program Changes Training on January 15, 17, and 22, 2013. These trainings included information on the following topics:

- The WTW 24-Month Time Clock;
- Alignment of State and Federal Participation Hours;
- New Young Child Exemption; and
- Reengagement.

Training materials were provided to the CDSS and aligned with SB 1041 implementation instructions issued by the CDSS. The county's training material was based on the training material provided by the CDSS through All County Information Notice (ACIN) I-08-13.

Successes

Solano County developed an extensive amount of staff training materials for SB 1041 implementation that included reference guides such as a desk manual for staff. Solano also developed a visual aid for clients to follow during orientation. In addition, Solano sent out all required notices in a timely manner. They were also able to track months on clients' WTW 24-Month Time Clock in their county manually.

The county utilizes Employment Development Plans specifically for clients that explore both short- and long-term goals. In regards to the completion of comprehensive discussions, a tiered approach was used to prioritize. This approach focused on sanctioned clients initially followed by all WTW Work Eligible individuals, then sending the Welfare-to-Work 24-Month Time Clock Notice (CW 2208) notice to clients who had annual renewals between January 1st and May 1st. The county continued to send the notice to all applicants and recipients. Clients will continue receiving their comprehensive discussions at their annual renewal in 2014.

Key Recommendations

Solano County should continue to monitor data on their progress of SB 1041 implementation, specifically information related to what sort of participation options clients are choosing to take advantage of (WTW 24-Month Time Clock activities or meeting CalWORKs federal standards) during their time on aid.

Also of importance, Solano County should ensure that clients receive the Welfare-to-Work 24-Month Time Clock Notice (CW 2208) timely as required by All County Letter (ACL) 13-12 and continue their efforts to provide all clients with their comprehensive discussions, as required by ACL 12-67.

The CDSS also recommends that Solano County continue to pay close attention to the data that is submitted through their consortium system to the Department such as the CalWORKs WTW Monthly Activity Reports for All (Other) Families and Two Parent Families (WTW 25/25A). These

sources are relied upon heavily by the Department so accurate reporting from counties will ensure a better understanding of how SB 1041 changes have affected clients in the CalWORKs program.

Acknowledgments

The CDSS thanks Solano County 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

Solano At-a-glance

Total Caseload.....	5,812
(Source: CalWORKs Cash Grant Caseload Movement Report CA 237 CW Line Item 8-July 2013)	
WTW Enrollees.....	1,746
(Source: CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Monthly Activity Report WTW 25/25A Line Item 1-July 2013)	
Mandatory Participants (enrollees + sanctioned + non-compliance).....	2,296
(Source: CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Monthly Activity Report WTW 25/25A Line Item 1, 3A, and 31-July 2013)	
Reengagement Plan Received.....	Yes
Beginning Date of Reengagement.....	January 1, 2014

Data/Statistics:

- 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: **621**
- Clients who had less than 24-months or equal to 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit as of January 1, 2013, that have had their comprehensive discussion: **380**
- Sanctions that were cured as a result of SB 1041: **81**
- Former short-term young child exempt clients (Assembly Bill [AB] X4 4) that have been reengaged: **None**
- Number of WTW plans that changed as a result of SB 1041 implementation: **233**
- Clients that have used the new once in a lifetime young child exemption: **65**
- Other statistics that the county is keeping related to SB 1041 implementation: **None**

Summary of Documents provided by Solano County:

- Instructional announcements provided by the county 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.
- Solano County's Reengagement Sequencing Plan.

County Administrator and Caseworker Interviews

The CDSS Field Monitoring Team used the county administrator and caseworker interview tools released in ACIN I-42-13 to interview the county administrator and case workers in-person regarding SB 1041 implementation. The tool was provided to the county administrator and caseworkers in advance of the visit. The administrator interview panel consisted of four CDSS staff with two county administrators. The caseworker interviews were conducted by two CDSS staff members with one caseworker.

Summary of Observations

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

For clients with Less than 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit

Solano County issued the initial WTW 24-Month Time Clock General Informing Notice (CW 2205) on November 29, 2012, with a second issuance of the notice in February, 2013. Following the issuance of this notice, the county began comprehensive discussions with clients via phone, mail or in person beginning January 15, 2013. All comprehensive discussions were not completed at the time of the site visit. Existing clients were continuing to receive their comprehensive discussions. The county tracked the completion of the comprehensive discussions using manual reviews. County staff were instructed to include documentation of the comprehensive discussion on a caseload inventory log.

In general, some clients chose to reduce their hourly participation requirements and some enrolled in Adult Basic Education as a result of the new program rules. Clients who were working frequently chose not to reduce their hours. Also, in order to extend their time in Vocational Training, clients that have exhausted their 12-month vocational training limit for CalWORKs federal standards are choosing to utilize the WTW 24-Month Time Clock for education activities.

For clients with more than 24 months left on their CalWORKS 48-month time limit

Solano County started the SB 1041 transition for this group beginning January 15, 2013, for 621 clients. In general, clients with more than 24 months remaining on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit are choosing to meet federal standards and preserve their WTW 24-Month Time Clock.

Clients who failed to attend SB 1041 appointments:

Clients meeting new participation requirements who failed to attend their scheduled SB 1041 appointment were sent SB 1041 Contact/Appointment Letter (Form 1-13) to attend a scheduled appointment and a copy of new Welfare-to-Work Plan Activity Assignment (WTW 2). For clients not meeting new participation requirements who failed to attend their SB 1041 appointments, they were sent the SB 1041 Contact/Appointment Letter (Form 1-13) as well. Clients are allowed to reschedule appointments once, however, if they fail to attend that rescheduled appointment, then the non-compliance process is initiated.

General Comments

Employment Resources Specialists have approximately 100-115 clients. The cases were prioritized in order to meet mandated deadlines. The sanctioned clients were first contacted for their comprehensive discussion followed by participating clients. The additional comprehensive discussions were determined based on the next point of contact. There wasn't a clear order to which the cases were sorted. For example, some Employment Resources Specialists went down a list while others worked the case when an attendance report was due and others did it when clients came in to drop off paperwork.

New Young Child Exemption

There were a few cases that chose the new exemption. Solano reported 65 clients to date have received the new young child exemption.

The new WTW Plan Activity Assignment (WTW 2)

The Welfare-to-Work Plan Activity Assignment form was made available in their consortium system and the county began its use effective January 1, 2013.

General Comments

The Employment Resources Specialists noted that they have been able to utilize the WTW 2 for pre-assessment activities, such as Job Club/Search. However, the Employment Resources Specialists also noted that some clients get a little confused when they see the same activities listed on both sides of the form under CalWORKs and Federal Work Activities. Additionally, Employment Resources Specialists felt that the WTW 2 form is too long and most clients are overwhelmed by the amount of information. In some cases, clients are unable to understand without full assistance from their Employment Resources Specialist. For some clients a face-to-face meeting was not required. Those clients that were unable to come in for appointments were given their comprehensive discussion over the phone.

Reengagement Process

The county's reengagement process will officially begin on January 1, 2014. The new rules for CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work activities CW 2206 mass mailer was sent on April 9, 2013, to all AB X4 4 short-term exempt individuals. Appointment letters will go out at least 30 days prior to Reengagement evaluation appointments. The target completion date for reengagement is December 31, 2014.

Solano County's Sequencing Plan is as follows:

- **January 1, 2014:** At annual renewal/redetermination, unless client requests to be reengaged earlier.

The reengagement process for Solano County includes 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 with an attached CW 2186A and a copy of the CW 2206.

Prior to reengagement, clients are allowed to volunteer to participate or they can reengage ahead of when they are scheduled in the county's sequencing plan.

Implementation Strategies

In January 2013, Solano County presented to staff SB 1041 overview training and followed with several additional staff training opportunities. The following trainings were completed:

- Understanding Changes to CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work;

- New Rules for Welfare-to-Work: Welfare-to-Work 24-Month Time Clock;
- Assessment and the New Welfare-to-Work 2;
- Welfare-to-Work Reengagement and Sequencing; and
- New Rules for the CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Program.

The county released a series of staff memorandum providing clarification on additional issues and as a follow up to staff trainings:

- Memorandum 12/13-17 Work Participation Hours Within the 24-Month Time Clock (December 21, 2012);
- Memorandum 12/13-18 Short term Exemptions and New Welfare-to-Work Exemption (December 21, 2012);
- Memorandum 12/13-19 Welfare-to-Work 24-Month Time Clock (December 27, 2012);
- Memorandum 12/13-22 Reengagement (January 7, 2013);
- Memorandum 12/13-27 Welfare-to-Work Exemption-Caring for child 0-23 months BENDS CR6173-1A (March 20, 2013); and
- Memorandum 12/13-28 Welfare-to-Work 24-Month Time Clock Noticing Requirements (March 22, 2013).

Larger issues were addressed via formal training as described above. Program Specialists and other staff also self-initiated review of ACLs as they are released from the CDSS. All training material was reviewed and met the requirements issued by the CDSS.

Case Reviews

The CDSS Field Monitoring Team reviewed five cases selected by the CWD in advance of the visit. The purpose of this component of the visit is to review how SB 1041 program changes are being integrated into case management, understand how SB 1041 policies are being operationalized by the caseworker, 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 is sanctioned that has earnings and is curable based on the new participation requirements (may be a case actually cured since January 1, 2013 based on new participation requirements); and
- Case Five-a client that is part of the former short-term young child exemption (AB X4 4)/ reengagement population, and is currently in the process of or has been reengaged.

General Comments

Solano County uses the CalWIN case management system. The following is a summary of the case findings:

- Noticing Requirements
All noticing requirements were met.
- Comprehensive discussions and additional outreach
Four ongoing cases noted a comprehensive discussion occurring. The case file for the new client was not assessed as new clients receive the comprehensive discussion components as part of orientation.
- Learning disability screening
The screening was offered to five out of five cases reviewed. All five cases waived this screening.
- Welfare-to-Work Plan Activity Assignment (WTW 2)
All case files with WTW plans developed on or after January 2013, used the new Welfare-to-Work Plan Activity Assignment (WTW 2). In addition, two case files showed a reduction in hours as result of SB 1041. Two cases showed changes unrelated to SB 1041.
- New Young Child Exemption
Two cases were eligible for the once in a lifetime young child exemption during 2013. One case chose to take the new young child exemption.
- Reengagement
Case reviewed chose to reengage early and utilize the once in a lifetime young child exemption.

Conclusion

Successes

Solano County developed an extensive amount of staff training materials for SB 1041 implementation that included reference guides such as a desk manual for staff. Solano also developed a visual aid for clients to follow during orientation. In addition, Solano sent out all required notices in a timely manner. They were also able to track months on clients' WTW 24-Month Time Clock in their county manually.

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(CW 2208) notice to clients who had annual renewals between January 1st and May 1st. The county continued to send the notice to all applicants and recipients. Clients will continue receiving their comprehensive discussions at their annual renewal in 2014.

Challenges

Solano found that their greatest challenge was the complexity of the WTW 24-Month Time Clock, specifically the conflict between meeting federal work participation requirements versus the Welfare-to-Work 24-Month Time Clock requirements. Additionally, they acknowledged that at times it has been difficult explaining those changes to clients. Clients also struggle with understanding such a significant amount of changes in a short time. Moreover, the county expressed challenges with the close timing of these changes in addition to their other priorities including the implementation of Semi-Annual Reporting and the Affordable Care Act have been difficult. Also the delay in the issuance of instructions by the CDSS was a hardship; however, the continued issuance of Q&A All County Letters to clarify policy has been beneficial. There were also delays with automation which led to a manual tracking process.

Key Recommendations

Solano County should continue to monitor data on their progress of SB 1041 implementation, specifically information related to what sort of participation options clients are choosing to take advantage of (WTW 24-Month Time Clock activities or meeting CalWORKs federal standards) during their time on aid.

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