

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

Ventura County

Visit Date: November 20, 2013

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

Ventura 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 short term young child exempt population (Assembly Bill [AB] X4 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 Ventura County on Tuesday, November 20, 2013 at the County of Ventura Human Services Agency administrative office in Ventura, CA. The field monitoring visit team included two staff from the CDSS, Welfare to Work Division, CalWORKs Employment and Eligibility along with Ventura County's Deputy Director, WTW program managers, and county caseworkers (Employment Specialists). The field monitoring visit consisted of a kick-off meeting, close-out meeting, staff and administrator interviews, and case management observations with county staff.

Implementation Strategies

Ventura County's implementation strategy consisted of a comprehensive approach to inform staff of SB 1041 related program changes which included WTW Program Bulletins, classroom style training for all staff, and the creation of helpful instructional documents, tracking logs/reports, and job aids.

Ventura County began implementation of SB 1041 program changes in November 2012. In January 2013 classroom style training was provided to all levels of WTW staff on the new hourly participation requirements, the WTW 24-Month Time Clock, and new *WTW Plan Activity Assignment Form* (WTW 2). In March 2013 classroom style training was provided to all Client Benefit Specialists and Employment Specialists regarding the reengagement process. In the Summer and Fall of 2013 Ventura County began issuing guidance and providing training to staff regarding automation of the WTW 24-Month Time Clock into the CalWIN consortium system. Training implemented by the county was supported by the issuance of numerous WTW Program Bulletins which provided additional instruction to staff regarding the integration of SB 1041 program changes into the county's existing WTW program.

Successes

Ventura County's step by step approach to implementing SB 1041 program changes was well organized and comprehensive. Ventura County developed an extensive amount of informative documents (WTW Program Bulletins) which thoroughly explained the WTW program changes and the impact on tasks carried out by Employment Specialists. This county utilized tracking logs/reports in order to track overall progress of SB 1041 implementation efforts. The overall structure and depth of these documents and logs/reports appeared to benefit Ventura County's implementation of SB 1041 program changes.

Ventura County also utilized various methods to share SB 1041 program change information with staff. These methods included utilizing traditional classroom style training, informative email correspondence, and Question and Answer (Q&A) forums. Ventura County also created various comprehensive job aids, county specific notices, and guides for said notices that were used by its Employment Specialists to assist clients in understanding WTW program options and assure proper notice usage.

Ventura County has four Community Service Centers that handle eligibility intake and employment services. These multi-disciplinary centers provide a full array of WTW services to address client barriers. This comprehensive approach to service delivery connects clients with the services they need in order to be successful in the WTW program. Ventura County also currently has a subsidized employment program in place, contracting with Goodwill Industries for these services. This relationship provides clients with the opportunity to learn job-readiness skills, which are necessary in order to achieve permanent and sustaining employment.

Ventura County also focuses on placing clients in education programs geared towards long term careers, with the hope that these programs will move clients toward self-sufficiency and reduce

client recidivism. Ventura County has nurtured a continued collaborative relationship with its local Community Colleges in order to further assist clients to the best of its ability. Ventura County currently holds monthly meetings with Community College representatives in order to assure process and policy issues presented by this group have an avenue by which to be expressed, discussed, and potentially remedied.

Key Recommendations

Ventura County should continue to collect data on SB 1041 implementation and pay close attention to the data which is submitted through the CalWIN consortium system 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 data sources are relied upon heavily by the CDSS to measure program progress.

Currently, Ventura County has a committee in place with the purpose of assessing engagement strategies for clients who are partially participating or not participating in WTW. The CDSS recommends that Ventura County continue this assessment effort and expand its outreach efforts to clients who are partially participating or not participating in WTW in order to continue encouraging client participation in CalWORKs WTW activities and services. Also, Ventura County should continue working towards assuring that time is counted correctly towards short term young child exempt (AB X4 4) clients' WTW 24-Month Time Clocks and that these clients receive WTW services appropriately. Ventura County should also continue its efforts of nurturing its working relationship with its Community College partners to ensure its clients' educational needs are being met.

Acknowledgments

The CDSS thanks the County of Ventura 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

Ventura County at-a-glance

Total Caseload	6,088
(Source: CalWORKs Cash Grant Caseload Movement Report [CA 237 CW] Line Item 8 - August 2013)	
WTW Enrollees	1,445
(Source: CalWORKs Welfare to Work Monthly Activity Report [WTW 25/25A] Line Item 1 - August 2013)	
Mandatory Participants (enrollees + sanctioned + non-compliance).....	2,031
(Source: CalWORKs Welfare to Work Monthly Activity Report [WTW 25/25A] Line Item 1, 3A, and 31 - August 2013)	
Reengagement Plan Received	Yes
Beginning Date of Reengagement	February 2013
Consortium System	CalWIN

Data/Statistics Available at Time of Field Monitoring Visit

- Clients with more than 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit as of January 1, 2013 who have had their comprehensive discussion: **882**
- Clients with less than 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit as of January 1, 2013 who have had their comprehensive discussion: **291**
- Clients who elected to change their WTW Plan as a result of SB 1041 new participation requirements: **58**
- Sanctions that were cured as a result of SB 1041: **0**
- Clients who have met the definition of reengaged: **75**
- Clients who have elected to take the New Young Child Exemption: **20**

Summary of Documents provided by Ventura County

- Instructional announcements (WTW Program Bulletins) provided by Ventura County to its staff relevant to SB 1041 implementation.
- Informing notices and flyers provided to clients relevant to SB 1041 implementation.
- Updated WTW Orientation materials.
- SB 1041 related training materials including training modules, procedures/guidelines, job aids, materials distributed during staff meetings, and instructional email correspondence.
- Ventura County's Assembly Bill (AB) X4 4 Short Term Exemption Reengagement Sequencing Plan.

County Administrator and Caseworker Interviews

The CDSS field monitoring team used the county administrator and caseworker interview tools released in All County Information Notice (ACIN) I-42-13 to interview Ventura County administrators and Employment Specialists in-person regarding SB 1041 implementation. The tools were provided to the Ventura County administrators and Employment Specialists in advance of the visit. The administrator interview panel consisted of two CDSS staff and numerous county administrative staff. The Employment Specialist interviews were conducted by two CDSS staff

members interviewing several Employment Specialists from different regional offices throughout Ventura County.

Summary of Observations

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

Transitioning Clients

[Less than and more than 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit as of January 1, 2013]

Ventura County issued the *New Rules for CalWORKs WTW Activities Informing Notice* (CW 2205) to all required clients through the CalWIN consortium system on November 29, 2012. Starting in February 2013 Employment Specialists made individual one-on-one appointments with each of their existing clients in order to conduct each comprehensive discussion. Ventura County's target completion date for all comprehensive discussions was June 30, 2013. At the time of this visit in late November 2013 all comprehensive discussions were complete. Employment Specialists were given an implementation order by which to contact clients for comprehensive discussions based on client time on aid. Clients who had less than 24 months left of their CalWORKs 48-month time limit as of January 1, 2013 were the first priority for scheduling comprehensive discussion appointments. Clients with more than 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit as of January 1, 2013 were the second priority for scheduling comprehensive discussion appointments.

Employment Specialists were instructed to develop new or amended WTW plans using the new SB 1041 program rules. Every client was offered the full array of activities allowed by the WTW 24-Month Time Clock. Staff were instructed to properly document each client's comprehensive discussion in the CalWIN consortium system in the '*Case Comments*' field. Due to a delay in automating the WTW 24-Month Time Clock, once a plan decision was made the client's Employment Specialist would document the client's WTW 24-Month Time Clock start date on the information checklist tab through the '*Maintain Employment Service Participation*' screen in the CalWIN consortium system.

Ventura County reported that many clients elected to take advantage of the lower hourly participation requirement permitted by SB 1041, and that some clients chose to take advantage of the new flexibility in activities permitted by the WTW 24-Month Time Clock. Particularly this flexibility enabled clients with mental health and/or substance abuse barriers to participate more intensely in respective treatment services which will ready them for future participation in employment or employment focused activities. Ventura County also reported that the majority of transitioning Self-Initiated Program (SIP) clients chose to continue with their original hourly participation level rather than lowering their hours based on the new SB 1041 program rules.

Clients who failed to attend SB 1041 appointments

For clients who failed to attend their SB 1041 comprehensive discussion appointment, Employment Specialists would follow up with additional outreach, including subsequent appointment letters and telephone calls. If the client continued to be unresponsive, the

Employment Specialist would issue a good cause determination appointment notice to the client. If responsive, a comprehensive discussion would take place either in-person or over the telephone and a WTW Plan would be developed and/or amended to reflect the client's choice in activities. If the client remained unresponsive, the non-compliance process was initiated.

General Comments

Employment Specialists are assigned an average of 70 active cases. Exempt cases are tracked by Client Benefit Specialists (ongoing eligibility workers) and sanctioned cases are handled by specialized Employment Specialists in each office. Ventura County has four Community Service Centers that handle eligibility intake and employment services. These multi-disciplinary centers provide a full array of WTW services to address barriers clients may have. Ventura County is also a Linkages County, coordinating case management for clients who are dually served by both CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services.

New Young Child Exemption

Employment Specialists interviewed during this field monitoring visit indicated that clients eligible for the New Young Child Exemption are generally opting to preserve the exemption for a later time. Clients who have elected to take this exemption tend to still participate in WTW activities as volunteers.

Clients with Good Cause for Lack of Supportive Services

Ventura County did not utilize the AB X4 4 option to provide clients with WTW good cause due to lack of supportive services with a CalWORKs 48-month time limit exemption.

The New WTW Plan Activity Assignment Form (WTW 2)

The new *WTW Plan Activity Assignment Form (WTW 2)* was made available via the CDSS website December 2012. By late January 2013 it was made available to all Ventura County staff. Employment Specialists interviewed during this field monitoring visit confirmed that they began using the WTW 2 immediately upon its release.

General Comments

The Employment Specialists interviewed during this field monitoring visit responded favorably to the release of the new WTW 2, indicating that the detailed form is helpful when discussing options with clients. Also, the expanded supportive services section of the WTW 2 was found to be helpful as well. Some Employment Specialists noted that the front page of the WTW 2 which includes double columns, reflecting the two different types of participation requirements (WTW 24-Month Time Clock and CalWORKs federal standards) felt 'too busy' and was difficult for clients to comprehend.

Reengagement Process

Ventura County began its reengagement process in February 2013 by issuing the *Young Child Exemption Ends December 31, 2012 - New Rules for CalWORKs WTW Activities Informing Notice* (CW 2206) to short term young child exempt (AB X4 4) clients via mass mailer according to its sequencing plan. Ventura County's Reengagement Sequencing Plan is as follows:

- **April 2013 -** Engage clients who are currently volunteering to participate in WTW activities.
- **May 2013 - 2014 -** Engage all remaining clients based on their CalWORKs case redetermination/recertification (RD/RC) date.

Beginning in March 2013 Employment Specialists (coordinating with Client Benefit Specialists - carriers of exempt cases) began scheduling volunteering clients for reengagement evaluation appointments. These appointments were scheduled throughout April 2013 using a standardized Reengagement Evaluation Appointment Letter (Notice 56-06-604). In May, Employment Specialists began scheduling reengagement evaluation appointments with all other clients based on the client's RD/RC date. These reengagement evaluation appointments were/are being scheduled approximately two weeks after each client's RD/RC appointment.

Employment Specialists were instructed to have a comprehensive discussion with each client during the client's reengagement evaluation appointment, explaining the new WTW program rules relating to SB 1041, criteria for WTW exemptions, and all other discussion components required by All County Letter (ACL) 13-01. Ventura County plans to complete its reengagement of all short term young child exempt (AB X4 4) clients by June 2014.

Ventura County reported that very few clients in this population had elected to volunteer in the WTW program. Clients who were volunteering in the WTW program prior to January 1, 2013 were allowed to continue volunteering until fully reengaged in accordance with ACL 13-01. As stated above, these clients were the first population to be targeted for reengagement, throughout April 2013. Clients who request to reengage early prior to their designated reengagement sequencing timeframe or who request to volunteer after January 1, 2013 are provided with all information regarding early reengagement, including that once reengaged early, they will be considered mandatory participants in WTW and that subsequently time will begin to count toward their CalWORKs 48-month time limit unless exempt for another reason.

General Comments

Ventura County initially instructed Employment Specialists to begin short term young child exempt (AB X4 4) clients' WTW 24-Month Time Clocks on January 1, 2013 if the client had less than 24 months left of his or her CalWORKs 48-month time limit as of January 1, 2013. Per ACL 12-57 and 13-01, time should not begin counting towards short term young child exempt (AB X4 4) clients' WTW 24-Month Time Clocks until they have been properly reengaged, which includes the signing of a WTW 2 and the provision of necessary supportive services. The CDSS is currently working with Ventura County to assure that time

is counted correctly towards short term young child exempt (AB X4 4) clients' WTW 24-Month Time Clocks and that these clients appropriately receive WTW services.

Implementation Strategies

Ventura County's implementation strategy consisted of a comprehensive approach to inform staff of SB 1041 related program changes which included WTW Program Bulletins, classroom style training for all staff, and the creation of helpful instructional documents, tracking logs/reports, and job aids.

Ventura County began implementation of SB 1041 program changes in November 2012. The *New Rules for CalWORKs WTW Activities Informing Notice* (CW 2205) was provided to all WTW program supervisors and clerical staff prior to its issuance via mass mailer as an initial means for key staff to become familiar with the new program rules. In January 2013 classroom style training was provided to all levels of WTW staff on the new hourly participation requirements, the WTW 24-Month Time Clock, and new *WTW Plan Activity Assignment Form* (WTW 2). In March 2013 classroom style training was provided to all Client Benefit Specialists and Employment Specialists regarding the reengagement process. In June 2013 additional instructions and clarification was provided to staff on the WTW 24-Month Time Clock. In the Summer and Fall of 2013 Ventura County began issuing guidance and providing training to staff regarding automation of the WTW 24-Month Time Clock in the CalWIN consortium system.

Training implemented by the county was supported by the issuance of numerous WTW Program Bulletins which provided additional instruction to staff regarding the integration of SB 1041 program changes into the county's existing WTW program. They also served as a means to distribute updated tools (i.e. updated Orientation materials) to all staff. Ventura County provided additional opportunities for staff to provide input and ask questions regarding SB 1041 related program changes in the form of Questions and Answers (Q&A) forums. During these Q&A forums all staff were encouraged to ask questions regarding implementation of SB 1041. Each Q&A forum would have a focused subject. Questions collected during these Q&A forums and other related trainings were later released to all staff in Q&A resource documents.

Ventura County also utilized email announcements to introduce new information, distribute information updates, and provide tracking log/report tools to staff. These logs/reports were used to gather information on SB 1041 implementation status and track potential implementation and automation issues. Ventura County also utilized tracking logs/reports in order to identify clients due for reengagement and track their reengagement progress. Ventura County also created job aids and instructional guides which were distributed via email announcements and/or during trainings. One job aid, the *WTW 24-Month Time Clock Appointment Reminder*, provided staff with a step by step approach to carrying out comprehensive discussions with clients, procedures for subsequent case actions, and WTW 24-Month Time Clock start date scenarios. One instructional guide, for the Reengagement Evaluation Appointment Letter (56-06-604), was also provided to staff to assure appropriate utilization of the notice.

Ventura County relied heavily on CDSS' implementing ACLs to develop its procedures and guidelines. As well, Ventura County's participation on the County Advisory Team (CAT) and CalWORKs Policy Committee (CPC) monthly meetings held in Sacramento enabled Ventura County to strategize with peer counties on the implementation of the new rules and resolve technical issues as they arose.

Case Reviews

The CDSS field monitoring team reviewed five cases selected by Ventura County in advance of the visit. The purpose of this component of the visit was to review how SB 1041 program changes are being integrated into case management, understand how SB 1041 policies are being operationalized by individual Employment Specialists, and better comprehend case management within Ventura 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 left 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 short term young child exemption (AB X4 4) population, and is in the process of or has been reengaged (if applicable).

General Comments

Ventura County uses the CalWIN case management system. Each of the five cases (four single-parents and one two-parent) was reviewed with its respective Employment Specialist. The cases varied by age of client, number of children in the Assistance Unit, ethnicity, education level, and primary language spoken. The following is a summary of the case findings:

- Noticing Requirements
Noticing requirements for the *New Rules for CalWORKs WTW Activities Informing Notice* (CW 2205) and *Your WTW 24-Month Time Clock Notice* (CW 2208) were met for all cases reviewed.
- Comprehensive Discussions and Additional Outreach
All cases reviewed had received a comprehensive discussion during an in person appointment with their respective Employment Specialist. Notation of these discussions was found in the 'Case Comments' section of the CalWIN consortium system.

- WTW Plan Activity Assignment Form (WTW 2)
All cases reviewed with WTW Plans developed on or after January 2013 had used the new WTW 2. Plan activities varied from employment to vocational education plans. The sanction case reviewed did not have a WTW 2 on file due to the client's failure to show up for required WTW engagement appointments.
- Sanction Case
For the sanction case, the client was scheduled for a WTW engagement appointment but failed to appear. The client continued to fail to appear for subsequent appointments and did not respond to subsequent notices, which resulted in the client falling into non-compliance.
- Reengagement Case
The case reviewed met all reengagement noticing requirements, including the *Young Child Exemption Ends December 31, 2012 - New Rules for CalWORKs WTW Activities* (CW 2206), timelines for the secondary contact/appointment, third contact reminder, etc. The client was reengaged back into the WTW program as of July 2013.
- New Young Child Exemption
Two cases reviewed were eligible for the New Young Child Exemption. Both clients declined the exemption.

Conclusion

Successes

Ventura County's step by step approach to implementing SB 1041 program changes was well organized and comprehensive. Ventura County developed an extensive amount of informative documents (WTW Program Bulletins) which thoroughly explained the WTW program changes and the impact on tasks carried out by Employment Specialists. Also, Ventura County utilized tracking logs/reports in order to track overall progress of SB 1041 implementation efforts. The overall structure and depth of these documents and logs/reports appeared to benefit Ventura County's implementation of SB 1041 program changes.

Ventura County also utilized various methods to share SB 1041 program change information with staff. These methods included utilizing traditional classroom style training, informative email correspondence, and Q&A forums. Ventura County also created various comprehensive job aids (i.e. *WTW 24-Month Time Clock Appointment Reminder*), county specific notices and guides for said notices (i.e. *Reengagement Evaluation Appointment Letter* [56-06-604]), that were used by its Employment Specialists to assist clients in understanding WTW program options and assure proper notice usage. Also, Ventura County submitted useful data for this field monitoring visit which assisted the CDSS in better understanding the impact of SB 1041 program changes on the Ventura County CalWORKs program.

Ventura County has four Community Service Centers that handle eligibility intake and employment services. These multi-disciplinary centers provide a full array of WTW services to address client barriers. This comprehensive approach to service delivery connects clients with the services they need in order to be successful in the WTW program. Ventura County is also a Linkages County, coordinating case management for clients who are dually served by both CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services. These activities appear to be promising practices, assuring clients receive the attention and barrier removal services they need in order to become job ready and work toward self-sufficiency. Ventura County also currently has a subsidized employment program in place, contracting with Goodwill Industries for these services. This relationship provides clients with the opportunity to learn job-readiness skills, which are necessary in order to achieve permanent and sustaining employment.

Ventura County also focuses on placing clients in education programs geared towards long term careers, with the hope that these programs will move clients toward self-sufficiency and reduce client recidivism. Ventura County has nurtured a continued collaborative relationship with its local Community Colleges in order to further assist clients to the best of its ability. Ventura County currently holds monthly meetings with Community College representatives in order to assure process and policy issues presented by this group have an avenue by which to be expressed, discussed, and potentially remedied.

Challenges

Ventura County's greatest challenge was the limited time frame allowed for SB 1041 program change implementation. Also the delay in the issuance of instruction by the CDSS was a hardship. Clarification on certain policy questions delayed the county's ability to begin the comprehensive discussion process with transitioning clients, implementing the new hourly participation requirements, and implementing the new CalWORKs federal standards. Ventura County did note that the continued issuance of SB 1041 related Q&A ACLs and other policy guidance provided by the CDSS has been beneficial.

As well, competing priorities such as the implementation of CalWORKs Semi-Annual Reporting (SAR) and the roll out of the Affordable Care Act/Covered California made it difficult to also implement SB 1041 program changes. Ventura County also noted during the visit that its general lack of affordable housing is an ongoing challenge.

Key Recommendations

Ventura County should continue to collect data on SB 1041 implementation and pay close attention to the data which is submitted through the CalWIN consortium system 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 data sources are relied upon heavily by the CDSS to measure program progress.

Currently, Ventura County has a committee in place with the purpose of assessing engagement strategies for clients who are partially participating or not participating in WTW. The CDSS

recommends that Ventura County continue this assessment effort and expand its outreach efforts to clients who are partially participating or not participating in WTW in order to continue encouraging client participation in CalWORKs WTW activities and services. Also, Ventura County should continue working towards assuring that time is counted correctly towards short term young child exempt (AB X4 4) clients' WTW 24-Month Time Clocks and that these clients appropriately receive WTW services. Ventura County should also continue its efforts of nurturing its working relationship with its Community College partners to ensure its clients' educational needs are being met.

Contacts

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