

Welfare to Work Grant Program 2001

Grant Program Partners

The San Bernardino County Welfare Department (CWD) is working with the following U.S. Department of Labor Welfare to Work Grant Program Partners:

- City of San Bernardino Workforce Investment Board – formula grant funds
- San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board – formula grant funds

Coordination of WtW Grant Activities with the WtW Grant Partners

The Workforce Investment Boards reviewed San Bernardino County's CalWORKs plan and discussed the activities available through the Welfare to Work (WtW) grant. The two entities agreed that the County Welfare Department (CWD) and the Jobs and Employment Services Department (JESD) would provide CalWORKs Employment Services followed by Assessment. The County does not focus on any specific population and all eligible TANF recipients are referred to services with Welfare to Work contract service providers. These services include Post-Employment and Job Retentions services, as well as six months of Pre-Employment Education and Training as allowed under H.R. 3424. If more than six months of training are required, all services are provided by CalWORKs. This satisfies the requirements of the welfare reform bill AB 1542 and H.R. 3424, in addition to meeting the County's CalWORKs plan for all welfare recipients to test the labor market through job search prior to receiving other services.

Following Employment Services and Assessment, WtW eligible TANF recipients will be referred to specialized workers in the JESD offices and County One-Stop Centers administered by JESD for referral to appropriate contract providers. Post-Employment services and Job Retention services are the focus of WtW contractor services.

Contractors may recruit participants, but eligibility and placement are the responsibility of JESD. Since JESD controls eligibility and placement, staff makes certain that there is no duplication of services.

JESD is currently working to establish linkages with the local Child Support Agency to identify and serve Noncustodial Parents

All WtW activities under the formula grant will assist in meeting the Work Participation Rate (WPR) established for TANF recipients, as well as the goals of the local CalWORKs plan.

CWD Identification and Referral of CalWORKs Recipients to WtW Grant Partners

In San Bernardino County, JESD/CalWORKs staff determine Welfare to Work eligibility of TANF applicants or recipients and record the eligibility factors/information on the JTA system for reporting to DOL. Potential WtW eligibility and information is collected from several resources. Length of time on aid will be determined by the quarterly MEDS report sent from the California State Department of Social Services (CDSS). Earned income during the previous year is available on the welfare database and lack of a GED or High School diploma is recorded on GEMS (JESD's computer system). Low scores in reading or math are determined through assessment testing.

In accordance with San Bernardino County's "Work First" philosophy, WtW eligible participants follow the CalWORKs program path. All are referred to Employment Services as the first activity.

Prior to referral for placement with providers, WtW eligible participants attend Assessment. This activity consists of some combination of grade placement tests in Math and Reading, work-related interest and aptitude inventories such as the COPES battery, and a description of the participant's skills, abilities, and work history. The Assessment report includes recommended occupations and services appropriate for achieving self-sufficiency.

After Assessment, the JESD Employment Specialist (ES) refers the participant to the DOL WtW Grant Program ES. A copy of the Assessment report accompanies the referral documents. The WtW Grant Program ES evaluates what services the participant needs. The ES assists the participant in completing the Welfare to Work Plan and places the participant with a WtW contract service provider. The ES enrolls the participant in the JTA computer system and begins tracking on the JESD computer system for reporting to CDSS.

JESD receives referrals directly from the Probation Department to serve eligible probationers, including noncustodial parents, in the WtW Grant Program.

State Fund Matching Dollars

State Match dollars are being used for eligible activities allowed under the regulations governing the WtW funds. Since JESD controls eligibility and placement into these activities, there is no duplication of services.

Serving Eligible Populations

JESD anticipates that the One Stop Centers will serve eligible populations not coming through the TANF referral process. Individuals who come to the One-Stop Centers looking for services will be screened for eligibility for the program. In addition, contractors will be able to do a reverse referral to determine if individuals who contact their program would be eligible to the program.

Long-Term Welfare Dependence

San Bernardino County and City WIBs recognize the long-term welfare characteristics of school dropout and teen pregnancy and will serve these populations with the WtW funds.

Another problem associated with welfare dependency is that of underemployment for many TANF recipients. Underemployment is too few hours or too low wages for recipients to leave the TANF system for any period of time due to increased earnings from unsubsidized employment. It also includes those who leave the system for a time due to employment, but return to the system because of a variety of problems affecting employment. These are the recipients who do not have the employment or occupational skills to compete successfully in the world of work. These underemployed recipients continue to receive some type of TANF payments or recycle back onto TANF periodically. Without intervention to break this cycle, these underemployed recipients will not acquire the employment skills necessary for them to become self-sufficient and to leave the TANF system permanently. They will continue to struggle unsuccessfully until the five-year time limit is up and they are forcibly removed from TANF with no job-related resources. Therefore, the WIBs have designated underemployment as a characteristic of long-term dependency.