

SUTTER COUNTY :

CalWORKs County Plan Addendum

Date Submitted to California Department of Social Services:

Donna Van Meter

(530) 822-7133 ext.112

dvanmeter@co.sutter.ca.us:

I hereby certify that County Board of Supervisors was briefed regarding the contents of this Plan addendum prior to submittal.


County Welfare Director's
Signature

Lori Harrah
Printed Name

1-3-07
Briefing Date

This plan addendum is submitted pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code Section 10534.

1) County Goals

After reviewing the county's existing CalWORKs County Plan, please provide a general description of how the county will meet the goals defined in Welfare and Institutions (W&I) Code Section 10540, while taking into consideration the work participation requirements of the federal Deficit Reduction Act of 2005.

The goals of W&I Code Section 10540 are the following:

- 1) Reduce child poverty in the State;
- 2) Reduce dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; reduce out-of-wedlock births; and encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families;
- 3) Meet the requirements of federal law while avoiding unanticipated outcomes that negatively affect child well-being, the demand for county general assistance, or the number of families affected by domestic violence.

A. General description of how the county will meet the goals of W&I Code 10540

1) It is the goal of Sutter County to reduce child poverty by providing basic cash assistance to the eligible applicants of Sutter County while providing supportive and employment services to aid and encourage the family's transition from Welfare to self-sufficiency. Sutter County will endeavor to educate and link families to resources such as Earned income Tax Credits, no cost or low cost health coverage for children, Food Stamp program, substance abuse and mental health services as well as subsidized child care and housing programs to assist in the transition from welfare to work.

2) Sutter County's Employment Services program is focused on promoting job preparation, work readiness, Job retention and career advancement through the "Employment 101" (Job Club) classes aimed at promoting employment and reducing dependence on government benefits. The new "Basic Life Skills" class curriculum encourages personal development through recognition of the individual family's values and strengths. Educational tools and resources regarding Marriage, Family Planning, Relationships, Goal Setting, Budgeting and Building Communication Skills are included in the curriculum.

3) Sutter County Employment Services reviews cases on a quarterly basis to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations. Each case is reviewed to determine if the services and activities are consistent with the overall case plan and if the household is participating accordingly. CalWORKs Public Assistant Specialist have been co-located with Employment Services to allow for better communication and coordination of services. This helps prevent interruptions in benefits and services that could adversely impact children and families. Sutter County has implemented Sutterlinks, a program that staffs and provides intensive services to families that are linked by CPS and CalWORKs involvement. Cases identified to have Domestic Violence (DV) issues are maintained in a separate caseload to provide specialized services specific to the needs of the family exposed to trauma of DV. Sutter County coordinates with the local shelter for victims of domestic violence (Casa de Esperanza) to provide ongoing training to staff regarding identification and services for clients exposed to DV.

2) Participation Improvement

Please describe what immediate and long-range actions the county will take to improve the federal work participation rate (WPR) among CalWORKs applicants and recipients. At a minimum, describe how the county will address increased participation in the areas listed below. When responding, provide a detailed description of the policy or strategy in each program area, the anticipated outcome that will result in program improvements, the percentage of families affected, and how success will be determined. Please note that if a county is already using a particular strategy that is successful, a description of that strategy is sufficient.

B. Providing up-front engagement activities

A current policy/strategy that will continue to be promoted for the applicant population is Fast Track. All applicants for cash assistance are given an opportunity to be seen by a "Fast Track" worker prior to the eligibility interview. The Fast Track Worker is an Employment and Training Worker or a Social Worker in Employment Services who informs the applicant of Diversion Services availability and explains the program requirements. Initially the focus of Fast Track was to inform clients of the change in regulations that stressed personal responsibility, work requirements, elimination of welfare as an entitlement and time limits. Fast Track is being restructured to emphasize the positive supportive aspects and opportunities available through the Employment Services program for those eligible to CalWORKs who can not be redirected back in to immediate employment. The importance of participation will be emphasized along with the opportunities available to CalWORKs participants. Fast Track will also be used to evaluate barriers up front that could hinder the applicant's ability to participate such as substance abuse, mental health issues or homelessness. Earlier identification of barriers will assist in meeting universal engagement timeframes as clients can be referred to the appropriate activity at initial engagement.

What are the anticipated effects?

Fast Track will impact 100% of the applicant population. The new focus on the positive aspects of Employment Services coupled with earlier identification of barriers such as substance abuse and mental health should improve cooperation and reduce the number of initial "no shows" for orientations.

How will success be determined (quantitative and qualitative assessment of effects)?

It is estimated that Fast Track will impact initial engagement in the appropriate activity and increase participation from the eligible population. Earlier identification and referral to appropriate services should be more effective as opposed to funneling all eligible recipients into Job club and Job search. Without the benefit of appropriate services to address specific barriers they will eventually surface during the process often resulting in the non participating client becoming sanctioned.

One way in which success will be determined is through case review. All cases in Employment Services are required to have a quarterly review written by the Social Worker or Employment and Training Worker and submitted to the Supervisor for sign off. The computer system is set to generate an alert to notify the worker and the supervisor when a review is due. Appointment no-show and participation can be tracked and compared to previous rates.

C. Achieving full engagement by individuals who are required to participate, and who are partially participating, not participating, or are between activities

Sutter County is working with our partners at Yuba College, the One Stop Business Center and onsite Mental Health and Substance Abuse staff to develop a list of core and non-core activities to be used short term between plan activities for continued participation and elimination of gaps. Staff will be provided with a list of intermediary activities that can be utilized. These activities may include short term component Life Skills and Vocational Skills classes, Vocation related work experience assignments and work study assignments.

What are the anticipated effects and percentage of families affected monthly

When clients are not fully participating for the required number of hours per week and gaps in services and activities occur, participants may lose site of the goal and begin to disengage. The anticipated effect is that clients who are partially participating will stay focused and engaged leading to a higher success rate and higher participation. The availability of short term activities, classes and assignments has the potential to impact the approximately 40 to 50 percent of the caseload that are not currently meeting WPR. The availability of such activities would continue during summer months when many traditional classes may not be in session.

How will success be determined (quantitative and qualitative assessment of effects).

See Section H below.

D. Providing activities to encourage participation and to prevent families from going into sanction status.

Description of policy(ies) or strategy(ies) that will result in program improvement

Sutter County has a newly developed Life Skills class. The class is being presented by onsite contracted Mental Health and Substance Abuse staff. Curriculum focuses on soft skills but is also geared to identifying and building a rapport with clients who may have previously unidentified Mental Health and/or Substance Abuse barriers. The class is modeled after the well received Employment 101 Job Club class that is open entry, open exit and component driven. This means that clients may enter at the start of a specific component and not have to wait for the entire program to be completed to engage. Social Workers and Employment and Training Workers can utilize individual components to fill in gaps between activities.

Fast Track redesign is also expected to be more effective in preventing families from going into sanction status. As previously stated screening for Substance Abuse and Mental Health issues should help prevent sanctions by earlier identification leading to more appropriate activity assignment up front.

What are the anticipated effects

As stated above it is anticipated the Life Skills class being presented by onsite Substance Abuse and Mental Health staff should result in "identifying and building a rapport with clients who may have previously unidentified MH and/or SA barriers" increasing the possibility of getting clients to engage in therapy and treatment before they fail an activity and become part of the sanction process.

Fast Track redesign is intended to result in "earlier identification leading to more appropriate activity assignment up front." Many of our families are unable to function in a work environment or maintain employment due to substance abuse and/or mental health barriers. Unidentified barriers often result in the client failing program requirements leading to sanctions. Both of the previously mentioned approaches are geared to earlier identification, appropriate referrals and activity assignments thereby avoiding the time consuming sanction process and improving work participation rates.

There is no way to fully anticipate the effects of early barrier identification, however a conservative estimate of the potential to prevent sanction would be 2 to 5 % of the current sanctioned caseload may be prevented by earlier identification of barriers leading to intervention and/or treatment.

How will success be determined (quantitative and qualitative assessment of effects)

See section H below.

E. Reengaging noncompliant or sanctioned individuals

Description of policy(ies) or strategy(ies) that will result in program improvement

A new strategy for Sutter County will be the creation of a sanction team to address open ongoing cases where at least one household member is sanctioned due to failure to meet a program requirement. The team will consist of a Social Worker III, Case Manager, Substance Abuse Counselor, Mental Health Worker and if necessary a Fraud Investigator. The case manager and Social Worker will make the initial home visit in an attempt to engage the client and cure the sanction. Depending on the outcome of the visit other Sanction Team members may be called in to assist in assessing and determining the cause for the inability /unwillingness to participate in the program. The strategy is to contact the most recent sanctioned cases first. It is anticipated that is where the most success will be realized. It is the team's intent that we will eventually contact 100% of the sanctioned caseload.

What are the anticipated effects

Home visits by the team should serve to help the client with misconceptions they may have about program requirements. If a client understands the requirements and is unable to follow through the team should be able to determine the reason for the failure and address the barrier with appropriate intervention. If the client refuses to participate for no immediate apparent reason then the Welfare Fraud Investigator may become involved to determine if the client is involved in unreported activities.

How will success be determined (quantitative and qualitative assessment of effects)

Caseload management reports are used to track the number of cases in sanctioned status. Supervisors will continue to monitor these reports to determine the outcome of the team's efforts.

Currently approximately 16% of Sutter County's CalWORK's caseload is in sanction status. It is anticipated that a portion of the sanctioned caseload could be cured if provided with additional program information to clear up misconceptions and identification of barriers leading to appropriate interventions and referrals. It is anticipated that could potentially result in an overall improvement to the participation rate of 3 to 5 percent.

F. Other activities designed to increase the county's federal WPR?

A new resource that will be available to Employment Services is a Work Resource Specialist through Mental Health who will provide assistance to case managers of exempt recipients to encourage voluntary participation. This position will also be available through a referral process to assist case managers by providing the technical skills to address hard to serve cases where multiple barriers have interfered with participation.

What are the anticipated effects and percentage of families affected monthly?

It is impossible to estimate to what degree we will be successful with recipients that are not required to participate. Since their participation is completely voluntary with no adverse impact for failing to engage, it remains to be seen what impact the position will have or to what degree exempt recipients will take advantage of the opportunities and available resource. Currently 20 percent of the CalWORKs caseload meets exemption criteria.

It is anticipated that we will have a degree of success with the hard to serve population (clients with multiple and long term barriers). Over all the impact is estimated at a potential 2 to 4 percent of the exempt caseload to voluntarily engage in the WTW program. The impact for this target group may not be appreciated immediately. This population will need time to learn new soft skills, put in to practice new coping skills and work through long term barriers.

How will success be determined (quantitative or qualitative assessment of effects)?

See H below

G. Please provide a description of how the county will collaborate with local agencies,

Sutter County has met with both the local community college and Sutter County Schools (holder of the WIA, ROP and Adult Education contracts in Sutter County) the One Stop Business Center to discuss the coordination of services and how to best partner with those services to achieve a better WPR. Yuba College and the One Stop have agreed to work with Employment Services to make available vocational skills programs, work study and certificate programs that can be achieved in 12 months or less to assist in meeting core hour timeframes. Additionally they will provide work experience assignments designed to assist clients in receiving training and experience in line with their specific employment goals. We have collaborated to provide shorter classes and provide work study activities that can be used to keep clients participating and engaged between activities and assignments. It is anticipated that 80% are impacted by coordination of services.

What are the anticipated effects

This will allow the case manager to strategize the best course of action and maximize the availability of vocational education and work experience while meeting the core and non-core hour requirements. It will help eliminate gaps in participation and keep the client engaged in employment related activities. It is estimated that the continued collaboration may result in an estimated 1 to 3 percent increase in the WPR.

How will success be determined (quantitative and qualitative assessment of effects)?

See section H below.

3) Plan to measure quarterly progress

Please describe how the county will measure the extent to which cumulative policies or strategies in the Plan addendum are successful, and how the county will measure progress on a quarterly basis (for example, participation rate of a specific population, sanction rate, orientation show rate, etc.). In addition, include the projected cumulative impact the county's policies or strategies will likely have on the county's federal work participation rate for each year of the next three years (for example, current rate of X will be increased to Y).

H. Plan to measure quarterly progress

Sutter County has already implemented a quarterly case review whereby 25% of cases are required to be submitted to the Supervisor or Lead Worker for review on a monthly basis. This allows 100% review of the caseload on a quarterly basis. The system will alert the case manager and the supervisor that a review is due. There is a template that address's barriers and recipients goals for the up coming quarter and services to be provided. The Template will be revised to include core and non-core participation hours to assist with review for participation compliance.

Measures of quarterly progress:

The quarterly review sheets will be recorded and the review data compiled into a report created to measure progress in the specific areas of change. The review sheets will be used to determine if cases are meeting WPR and if not, case specific quarterly plans will be amended to address participation. The compiled information will also be use to develop staff training.

Projected impact on county's federal WPR:

It is anticipated that based on the strategies included in this addendum that the actions taken will result in the County continuing to meet the required participation rate. Some of the approaches may need to be tested and refined, while others like the Life Skills class will take time to effect changes in the lives of some of the most hard to serve clients with substance abuse and mental health issues. Sutter County anticipates we will be able to continue to meet the WPR over the next 3 years despite the newly required additional caseloads.

4) Funding

Describe how the county has spent and plans to utilize single allocation and other funding for the county's CalWORKs program. This section will help explain to county and State stakeholders how increased funding will be used.

Program Component	Fiscal Year 2005-06 Actual Expenditures	Fiscal Year 2006-07 Budgeted Amount	Description of how additional funding provided in Fiscal Year 2006-07 will be used
CalWORKs Eligibility Administration	\$792,846.	\$1,047,811	Casework FTE's
WTW Employment Services	\$2,049,623	\$2,274,909	Casework FTE's
CalWORKs Child Care	\$1,124,822	\$1,199,256	Child Care
Cal-Learn	\$51,221	\$96,251	FTE
CalWORKs Funded Mental Health Services	\$91,045	\$127,966	**Adding Life Skills Class to be shared between MH and SA staff
CalWORKs Funded Substance Abuse Services	\$71,990	\$96,644	**
Other.			
Other			