

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

Sutter County

Visit Date: November 19, 2014

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

Sutter 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's goals are to ensure that SB 1041 is being implemented correctly by each CWD, to gather promising practices in regards to implementation, and to share these promising practices (when able) amongst all CWDs throughout the state. The CDSS is also determining 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.

County Visit General Information

The one-day field visit was performed in Sutter County on Wednesday, November 19, 2014 at the Sutter County Human Services Department in Yuba City, California. The field visit team included two managers and one analyst from the CDSS, WTW Division, CalWORKs Employment Bureau. Sutter County participants included the Deputy Director, Director, two Employment Services (ES) Social Worker Supervisors, one Program Manager, one ES Social Worker III, and one ES Social Worker I. The field visit consisted of a kick-off meeting, staff interviews, case management observations, and a close-out meeting with county staff.

Implementation Strategies

The ES supervisors and managers reviewed All County Letters (ACLs), determined reengagement sequencing, and developed the training format and materials prior to training ES

staff. Sutter County held all-staff trainings and several unit meetings with supervisors participating as trainers for various SB 1041 topics. The unit meetings consisted of informal discussion with question and answer sessions. Memos and informational training modules were provided to staff throughout the transition. Among the training tools developed by management were several “Program Information Policy & Procedure” (PIPP) guides detailing processes and highlighting possible client scenarios. Case managers interviewed by the CDSS FMV team said that unit meetings and informational packets were great ways to share SB 1041 information, help them do their jobs, and communicate with customers consistently on SB 1041 requirements. Sutter County distributed ACLs with SB 1041 guidance from the CDSS by email to ES staff. The ES staff then reviewed the ACLs in unit meetings with their managers.

Key Recommendations

- Continue staff trainings, consult with peer counties (at monthly County Advisory Team and CalWORKs Policy Committee meetings), and contact the CDSS Employment Bureau as needed to improve case managers’ skills and confidence with the WTW 24-Month Time Clock and WTW 2.
- Audit cases for Work Participation Rate compliance more frequently.
- Take advantage of written procedures to ensure program knowledge and implementation is not lost to turnover of ES staff.
- Consider employing a transportation aide or other strategies to deal with limited public transportation to help customers—especially those who are remotely located reach services and activities.
- Continue collaboration with local community colleges and neighboring counties to explore any opportunities to leverage resources.

Successes:

- Expanded Subsidized Employment (ESE) Program placed many clients in work.
- Sutter County employs clients at their ES locations through ESE.
- Regular unit meetings to discuss ES matters, including SB 1041.
- One-on-one training with lead social worker and case workers.
- Several ES Social Workers recently hired.
- Case workers review each case monthly and time clocks are reviewed quarterly.
- Co-located One Stop.
- Good relationship with local community colleges.
- Specialized workers handle Domestic Violence and CalLearn cases.
- Good case documentation.
- With lowered caseloads, workers are able to make home visits to sanctioned families.

Challenges:

- Very high unemployment rate and lack of job opportunities in the area.
- Highly competitive job market for qualified individuals.
- Alternatives to public transportation for customers to get to services and activities.

Acknowledgments

The CDSS thanks Sutter 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

Sutter at-a-glance:

Total Caseload.....	1,561
<small>(Source: CalWORKs Cash Grant Caseload Movement Report CA 237 CW Line Item 8a-August 2014)</small>	
WTW Enrollees.....	646
<small>(Source: CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Monthly Activity Report WTW 25/25A Line Item 1-August 2014)</small>	
Mandatory Participants (enrollees + sanctioned + non-compliance).....	952
<small>(Source: CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Monthly Activity Report WTW 25/25A Line Items 1, 3A, and 31-August 2014)</small>	
Reengagement Plan Received.....	Yes
Beginning Date of Reengagement	May 17, 2013
Consortium System.....	C-IV

Other data:

- Sutter County had 12 case managers as of November 19, 2014.

Data/Statistics:

- Customers 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: **All**.
- Customers 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: **All**.
- Sanctions that were cured as a result of SB 1041: **One**.
- Former short-term young child exempt customers (Assembly Bill [AB] X4 4) that have been reengaged: **All**.
- WTW plans that have changed as a result of SB 1041 implementation: **None**.
- Customers that have used the new once-in-a-lifetime young child exemption: **103**.

Summary of Documents provided by Sutter County:

- Initial Engagement Flow Chart
- Quarterly Sanction Report (WTW) detailing noticing protocol
- Sutter County Employment Services Division Quick References Training guide
- PIPP guide for Reengagement of Short-Term Exempt Individuals and corresponding notices, referencing Senate Bills (SB) 1041 and SB 72, All County Information Notice (ACIN) 12-69, All County Letter (ACL) 12-67, ACL 12-69 and ACL 13-01
- PIPP guide for Hourly Work Requirements for TANF and corresponding notices, referencing SB 1041, ACL 12-69
- PIPP guide for WTW 24-Month Time Clock referencing SB 1041, ACL 12-53, ACL 12-67
- Revised PIPP guide for WTW 24-Month Time Clock
- Memorandum regarding Updates to Time Limit pages for WTW 24-Month Time Clock Phase One
- A notice from ES Supervision to All Staff regarding 24-Month Time Clock review
- Sutter County Employment Services Policy Handbook section regarding CalWORKs WTW Participation Under SB 1041
- Sutter County Welfare & Social Services Division organization chart

- Sutter County CalWORKs Employment Services Branch organization chart

County Administrator and Caseworker Interviews

The CDSS Field Monitoring Team used the county caseworker and administrator interview tools released in All County Information Notice (ACIN) I-42-13 to interview the Deputy Director, Director, two ES Social Worker Supervisors, one Program Manager and two ES Social Workers regarding SB 1041 implementation. The tool was provided to the supervisors and case managers in advance of the visit.

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:

Sutter County issued the initial WTW 24-Month Time Clock General Informing Notice (CW 2205) in early November 2012. Sutter County conducted comprehensive discussions with customers who had less than or equal to 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit. Comprehensive discussions began January 1, 2013. All of the comprehensive discussions were completed as of June 30, 2013. The county sent appointment letters to customers to contact them about the SB 1041 changes to the CalWORKs WTW program. If customers did not respond to the letter, the county made phone calls as needed to ensure that customers received the comprehensive discussion.

Some customers chose to make use of the SB 1041 WTW 24-Month Time Clock options by attending school and/or furthering their education activities. Case managers stated that many customers expressed a strong understanding of the new WTW program rules, while some customers found the information about core and non-core activities for CalWORKs Federal requirements and two different time clocks challenging. Case managers and customers worked together to set realistic goals and develop “maps” to achieve goals in the time remaining on their clocks.

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

Sutter County also sent out the CW 2205 form in early November 2012 and conducted comprehensive discussions with customers who had more than 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit. Comprehensive discussions began January 1, 2013, and were completed as of June 30, 2013. The county sent appointment letters to customers to contact them about the SB 1041 changes to the CalWORKs WTW program. The county made phone calls if customers did not respond to the letter to complete all of their comprehensive discussions.

As with customers who had less than or equal to 24 months left on their 48-month time limits, the case managers used an outline to make sure they covered all elements of the comprehensive discussion—including exemption options, conditions that stop the WTW 24-Month Time Clock, opportunities for customers to change their activities and/or hours—

consistently and thoroughly. Case managers stated that many of these customers understand the new WTW program rules, while others found the information about core and non-core activities for CalWORKs Federal requirements and two different time clocks challenging.

Customers who failed to attend SB 1041 appointments:

When customers were unresponsive to multiple attempts by case managers to contact them by phone or in-person (home visits) about the comprehensive discussion, case managers initiated the non-compliance process.

General Comments

Case managers noted that sanctions encouraged customers to come in for their comprehensive discussions, although it took months for some customers to come in. The benefits of being in good standing, including receiving more grant money, were explained to the customers.

New Young Child Exemption:

Most of Sutter County CalWORKs customers who are eligible for the one-time, new young child exemption are opting to use it. Case managers make great efforts to clearly communicate the one-time limitation. Customers are informed that both adults in a two-parent household are eligible for this exemption, though only one adult may take it at a time.

General Comments

All of the former short-term young child exempt clients were re-engaged, starting May 1, 2013, and completed by October 1, 2013, as per Sutter's re-engagement plan.

Clients with Good Cause for Lack of Supportive Services

Sutter County has never had customers in good cause due to lack of supportive services. Thus, the county did not need to notify any customers that their 48-month time limit were starting again effective January 1, 2013, or to reengage any customers in this population.

The new WTW Activity Plan/Form WTW 2:

Sutter County has been using the new WTW 2 form since January 2013. Until the form was automated through the C-IV consortium in March 2013, the county used the WTW 2 form available on the CDSS website.

General Comments

The caseworkers noted that the WTW 2 form has simplified the process of explaining the 24-Month Time Clock to the customers. It was described as user friendly and a thorough explanation of requirements and options to customer was easier to complete. The customers seemed to understand the form and it helped with the initial confusion associated with the 24-Month Time Clock.

Reengagement Process

On May 17, 2013, Sutter County started sending out the “Young Child Exemption Ends December 31, 2012, New Rules for CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Activities” form (CW 2206) notifying all AB X4 4 exempt customers of changes to the CalWORKs program implemented by SB 1041. The county began reengaging customers on May 17, 2013.

Starting May 17, 2013, the first population that Sutter County began reengaging was AB X4 4 exempt customers with 0-19 months remaining on the 48-month time limit. Starting June 17, 2013, Sutter County began reengaging customers with 20-34 months remaining on the 48-month time limit. Starting July 17, 2013, Sutter County began reengaging customers with 35-39 months remaining on the 48-month time limit. Starting August 17, 2013, Sutter County began reengaging customers with 40-44 months remaining on the 48-month time limit. Starting September 17, 2013, Sutter County began reengaging customers with 45-48 months remaining on the 48-month time limit.

The reengagement process for Sutter County included the following:

- All case managers handled their own caseloads for reengagement.
- Each case manager reviewed their reengagement cases and categorized them into groups.
- The CW 2206 notices were sent starting May 17, 2013.
- Case managers contacted customers prior to their appointments to make sure the customers were able to attend.
- Case managers noted details of the reengagement appointments in the C-IV consortium system.

During the reengagement appointment, customers received their comprehensive discussions. All reengagement customers were provided with a general description of supportive services available, program requirements, and flexibility under the WTW 24-Month Time Clock. Workers determined customers’ status and needs and if another WTW exemption applied. Additionally, customers were informed of the number of months remaining in their CalWORKs 48-month time limit and assigned appropriate WTW activity(ies) that include addressing barriers as needed.

General Comments

Some Sutter County AB X4 4 exempt customers requested to reengage early after they received the CW 2206. Case managers scheduled appointments, provided comprehensive discussions, and completed all of the reengagement steps. Supportive services were provided and customers signed the WTW 2 to complete reengagement. Both of the interviewed case managers had clients request to reengage early, ahead of Sutter County’s sequencing plan. Clients who requested to engage early were assigned out from the exempt caseload and given to an individual case manager in order to complete the reengagement appointment.

Implementation Strategies

The ES supervisors, lead worker, and manager reviewed ACLs, determined reengagement sequencing, and developed the training format and materials prior to training case managers. Sutter County held several all-staff trainings and supervisors participated as trainers for various SB 1041 topics. Case workers were given the opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns, all of which were noted, reviewed, and responded to in unit meetings.

The unit meetings consisted of informal discussion with question and answer sessions. Memos and informational training modules were provided to staff throughout the transition. Among the training tools developed by management were several PIPP guides detailing processes and highlighting possible client scenarios. Case managers interviewed by the CDSS FMV team said that unit meetings and informational packets were great ways to share SB 1041 information, help them do their jobs, and communicate with customers consistently on SB 1041 requirements. Sutter County distributed ACLs with SB 1041 guidance from the CDSS by email to ES staff. The ES staff then reviewed the ACLs and immediately integrated the approaches and information into customer meetings.

The greatest challenges that Sutter County has dealt with in implementing the SB 1041 changes to the CalWORKs Program are the same as challenges faced by other counties: the complexity of the WTW 24-Month Time Clock process, which was made easier when it was properly understood how to fill out the new WTW 2 form.

Sutter County provided ES staff with the following materials:

- List of ACLs, ACINs, and other documents related to SB 1041 changes (updated regularly).
- Reengagement summary for case managers including noticing and potential case scenarios.
- WTW 24-Month Time Clock summary with examples.

Case Reviews

The CDSS Field Monitoring Team reviewed five cases selected by Sutter County 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 case managers, and better comprehend case management within the county.

There were five specific case types requested:

- Case One: a new customer (beginning date of aid January 1, 2014 or later);
- Case Two: 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);
- Case Three: a client with *less than or equal to* 24-months left on the CalWORKs 48-month time limit as of January 1, 2013;

- Case Four: 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;
- Case Five: a client with *more than* 24 months on the CalWORKs 48-month time limit as of January 1, 2013.

General Comments

Sutter County uses the C-IV case management system. The following is a summary of the case findings:

- *Cases One, Two, Three and Four were single-parent cases; Case Five was a two-parent case.*
- *Three of the five cases had reduced WTW requirements as a result of SB 1041.*
- *Three of the five cases completed Employment 101 as a function of the WTW Plan Component, while one case completed Assessment.*
- *Four of the five customers had waived the Learning Disability Screening, with the fifth case noted a language barrier as the reason for not completing the screening.*
- *All five cases completed comprehensive discussions, with four being at an appointment and one completed over the telephone.*
- *An additional notice was sent to one customer, while the other four cases did not require additional notice.*
- *Appraisal/assessment was completed and documented with all five cases. Three of the customers were placed in an activity while one case received a new young child exemption.*
- *Four of the five WTW plans remained unchanged.*
- *The one customer that had a changed case went from a Self-Initiated Program (SIP) to employment.*

Conclusion

Successes

- The Sutter County ESE Program has placed many clients in work, some of whom have been placed at the Sutter County ES location.
- Regular unit meetings to discuss ES matters, including SB 1041 proved beneficial to ES staff and helped with the changed required by SB 1041.
- Sutter County employs one-on-one training with lead social worker and case workers to create an opportune learning environment. Questions are answered and the personal interaction facilitates a high level of understanding.
- Case workers review each case monthly and time clocks are reviewed quarterly.
- Sutter County has co-located One Stop, making services and support readily available to all customers.
- Good relationship with local community colleges are fostered and maintained.
- Specialized workers handle Domestic Violence and CalLearn cases.
- Sutter County ES staff maintain good case documentation in the C-IV system.

- With lowered caseloads, workers make home visits to sanctioned families.

Challenges:

- Very high unemployment rate (10.3%) and lack of job opportunities in the area.
- Highly competitive job market for qualified individuals.
- Per the 2013 Census estimate, the population in Sutter County is 95,350. The current unemployment rate is among the highest in the state. Per EDD, the unemployment rate for 2014 is 10.3%, compared to the California average of 6.9%. Farming is a popular profession in Sutter County and has suffered as a result of the drought.
- Per the 2013 Census estimate, the poverty level for Sutter County from 2008-2012 was 17%.
- Sutter County's per capita income was \$22,816 versus the California average of \$29,551 for 2008-2012.
- Lack of alternatives to public transportation for customers to get to and from services and activities.

Sutter County found that one of challenges was the limited time frame allowed for SB 1041 implementation, including the June 30, 2013, deadline established to complete outreach to all transitioning WTW clients. However, the county made very good progress in implementing SB 1041 with the resources available. The WTW-24 Month Time Clock is a complicated process for case managers and customers. Some customers struggle to understand the differences between “core” vs. “non-core” and the 48-month time limit versus the WTW 24-Month Time Clock. In addition, some customers are confused by the complexity and length of the new WTW 2 form. Sutter County has limited public transportation options during the week, which can hinder customers' access to services and activities. The delay in the issuance of instruction by the CDSS was also a hardship; the continued issuance of SB 1041 question and answer ACLs to clarify policy has been beneficial. Sutter County has a very high unemployment rate and a highly competitive job market for qualified individuals. Case workers told stories of job seekers with Master's degrees competing for entry level positions throughout the county. Additionally there is a high client demand for training in nursing and other medical technician fields but the field is already saturated in Sutter County.

Key Recommendations

- Continue staff trainings, consult with peer counties (at monthly County Advisory Team and CalWORKs Policy Committee meetings), and contact the CDSS Employment Bureau as needed to improve case managers' skills and confidence with the WTW 24-Month Time Clock and WTW 2.
- Audit cases for Work Participation Rate compliance more frequently.
- Take advantage of written procedures to ensure program knowledge and implementation is not lost to turnover of ES staff.
- Consider employing a transportation aide or other strategies to deal with limited public transportation to help customers—especially those who are remotely located reach services and activities.
- Continue collaboration with local community colleges and neighboring counties to explore any opportunities to leverage resources.

Contact

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