

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814



October 5, 2006

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 06-46

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CalWORKs PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL WELFARE TO WORK COORDINATORS

**SUBJECT: TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)
REAUTHORIZATION AND CALIFORNIA WORK OPPORTUNITY AND
RESPONSIBILITY TO KIDS (CalWORKs) WELFARE-TO-WORK (WTW)
COUNTY PLAN ADDENDUM REQUIRED BY ASSEMBLY BILL (AB) 1808
(CHAPTER 75, STATUTES OF 2006)**

REFERENCES: All County Letters (ACL) 97-54, 00-08, 06-27, 06-42, and All County Information Notice (ACIN) I-65-06

The purpose of this letter is to inform counties of new CalWORKs County Plan (Plan) addendum requirements resulting from the passage of AB 1808 (Chapter 75, Statutes of 2006). These Plan addenda will identify new strategies and/or policies that counties plan to employ to improve work participation rates (WPR) in light of new TANF Reauthorization requirements and subsequent State law changes that were enacted through AB 1808. This letter also provides counties with a brief overview of changes resulting from the reauthorization of the TANF program and their significance to counties. This letter and the attachments have been developed in consultation with stakeholder groups, including the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA), convened by the Department to help implement TANF Reauthorization requirements.

BACKGROUNDTANF Reauthorization

TANF Reauthorization was included in the federal Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA), which became law in February 2006. The effective date for implementation of most of the DRA changes is October 1, 2006, with the exception of some of the new work verification requirements that do not take effect until October 1, 2007, and will be described in a subsequent letter. Federal TANF interim final regulations were issued June 29, 2006 that made additional changes. Although the WPRs that states must

meet did not change (they remain at 50 percent for all families and 90 percent for two-parent families), California must increase its actual WPR substantially, primarily due to the new base year for the caseload reduction credit described later in this letter. The most recent estimate of the State's 2005 federal WPR without a caseload reduction credit is 27.9 percent for the all family rate (single- and two-parent families) and 33.6 percent for two-parent families.

State Response to TANF Reauthorization

In response to changes to the TANF program, the Department has organized a series of stakeholder meetings over the past several months to discuss strategies to assist California in meeting federal requirements and reducing its vulnerability to fiscal penalties. In addition to representatives from the Department, stakeholders include legislative staff, CWDA, the California State Association of Counties, legal and welfare rights advocates, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, the Employment Development Department, the California Departments of Finance, Education, Child Support Services, and others.

Throughout this effort, stakeholders have worked hard to maintain the structure and the integrity of the CalWORKs program to provide a mix of services and activities, including education, training, and behavioral health services, as it moves families from aid to self-sufficiency. The structure of the CalWORKs program has not changed with one exception: the three- and six-month minimum sanction requirement for individuals in their second, third, or subsequent instance of noncompliance was repealed to allow them to re-engage in the WTW program at any time they perform the activity they previously failed or refused to perform (please see ACL 06-27).

The stakeholder group discussions influenced development of the AB 1808 provisions relating to the CalWORKs program that are intended to help counties increase the level of WTW participation among CalWORKs recipients. ACIN I-65-06 provides a summary of all of the AB 1808 provisions. The Department is also preparing a number of ACINs to share recommendations and information that stakeholders believe will improve county operations. In addition, as workgroups identify best practices, promising practices, and practices that have not been successful, the Department, in consultation with CWDA, plans to develop a website to assist counties in taking advantage of lessons learned.

Summary of Federal TANF Law and Regulation Changes

The Department will be releasing a subsequent ACIN that provides a full description of TANF Reauthorization changes. In the meantime, a summary of major changes is provided below.

Caseload Reduction Credit

Federal law changed the base year that is used for calculating the caseload reduction credit from federal fiscal year (FFY) 1995 to FFY 2005. This means that California will

no longer receive credit for its 46.4 percent caseload reduction realized between FFY 1995 and FFY 2004. Due to current caseload trends, using 2005 as the base year, it appears that the State will receive a very small caseload reduction credit for FFY 2007.

New Caseloads/Populations Added to the WPR

The new federal rules require “work-eligible individuals” to be included in the WPR and define these individuals, with certain exceptions, as adults or minor heads-of-household receiving assistance under TANF or separate state programs funded with State Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds. In California, this adds approximately 79,000 cases (including sanction cases after the first 90 days and parents in safety net cases), and two-parent families to the WPR requirements. With the new populations included in the WPR, the Department estimates the State’s FFY 2005 all families WPR would be reduced to approximately 23 percent.

Work Activity Definitions and Work Verification Plan

The new TANF regulations provide definitions for WTW activities that are countable toward the federal WPR and require the State to submit an interim Work Verification Plan by September 30, 2006 to establish verification and oversight procedures, including the establishment of quality assurance provisions, to ensure accurate and consistent measurement of participation among states. The Department’s upcoming ACIN with a detailed summary of TANF Reauthorization provisions will include the new federal definitions of federally allowable activities. California’s current list of work activities has not changed. The Department worked with one of the stakeholder workgroups to develop the Work Verification Plan that was submitted to the federal government on September 28, 2006. Additional information about the plan and instructions will be transmitted in a separate letter.

Financial Implications of TANF Reauthorization

With the much reduced caseload reduction credit and the inclusion of new populations in the WPR, the Department, counties, and State and local service providers will need to work closely together to engage CalWORKs recipients, sanctioned households, and safety net cases, to achieve the federal WPR. If California does not meet the WPR, the State will incur a fiscal penalty of up to five percent (\$187 million) of the State’s block grant in the first year, depending on the degree of non-compliance. This penalty can increase two percent each year, up to 21 percent. FFY 2009 is the first year California will be at risk of incurring a fiscal penalty based on the State’s performance in FFY 2007, which began on October 1, 2006. However, when a state fails to meet TANF WPR requirements, it may receive a penalty reduction by meeting a minimum WPR threshold and increased participation tests, and/or by entering into a corrective compliance plan and achieving significant progress toward correcting the violation. Should the State be in penalty status in the future, the State’s ability to receive a penalty reduction is dependent on all stakeholders’ efforts to fully engage recipients and increase work participation. Ongoing improvement in the State’s WPR would help demonstrate to the federal government a good faith effort to meet requirements and may help mitigate penalties.

If the State does not meet the federal WPR requirements and cannot avoid penalties, the State and counties would be equally responsible for a federal fiscal penalty. Welfare and Institutions (W&I) Code Section 10544 requires the State to pass on 50 percent of federal penalties to counties that fail to meet federal WPR requirements. The Department will be working with CWDA to determine the exact methodology and process for sharing any federal penalties with counties. ACIN I-65-06 provides further detail about the penalty pass-on provisions.

In addition to avoiding fiscal penalties, counties may earn Pay for Performance program incentive funds by improving their federal WPR, their employment rate, rate of families leaving aid due to employment, and rate of families leaving aid due to employment with higher earnings. ACL 06-42 provides instructions for counties to follow in order to participate in the Pay for Performance program. Forty million dollars of FY 2006-07 TANF funds have been set aside for payment in FY 2007-08.

COUNTY PLAN ADDENDUM

It is important that counties increase their efforts to engage CalWORKs WTW populations, both immediately and in the long term, so that participants can move toward self-sufficiency and the State can come as close as possible to meeting the federal WPR requirements and avoid or reduce any federal penalties. For this reason, the FY 2006-07 State Budget provided counties a \$90 million increase in funding and \$140 million as a base restoration. In addition, State law was enacted to establish new County CalWORKs Plan requirements. AB 1808 enacted W&I Code Section 10534, which requires each county to perform a comprehensive review of its existing CalWORKs Plan and prepare and submit to the Department a Plan addendum detailing how the county will meet specified goals, taking into consideration the work participation requirements of TANF Reauthorization. Similar to the stakeholder process that guided the TANF response on the State level, it is recommended that counties collaborate with local providers such as local workforce investment boards, community colleges, universities, adult schools, regional occupational centers/programs, and local advocates to develop the Plan addenda.

The Department recommends that each county focus on those areas where changes in strategies or policies will result in the most significant impact on its WPR. This requires reviewing county data and policies on upfront engagement (how quickly applicants move to full participation upon approval of their application for cash aid), noncompliance and sanctions (including re-engagement of sanctioned individuals), partial participation (for individuals participating less than the required hours per week or not participating during times when they are between activities), and other areas that may be unique to the county. Counties need to review the general participation of their safety net cases in allowable activities since they now are subject to the federal requirements, and determine how best to increase participation for individuals in this category. The Department will also be working with stakeholder groups and the Legislature over the next year to develop policies and strategies for working with the safety net population. Additional information and instructions will be issued in the future.

The Plan addendum (see Attachment 1 for template) also requires counties to describe how they will collaborate with local agencies, including community colleges, universities, local workforce investment boards, adult schools, and regional occupational centers/programs. Not only can these entities provide services, but they can also help counties identify issues that should be addressed in order to increase participation. As an example, the FY 2006-07 State Budget included an additional \$9 million for local community colleges to increase work study opportunities for CalWORKs recipients. Community colleges are required to describe how they are coordinating with the county welfare department when they submit a plan for utilizing this money; therefore, it is important for counties to work closely with local community colleges to access this funding. Work study is a form of subsidized employment that counts toward the core work participation requirement and provides recipients with meaningful training and work experience, while they are attending school, that will help them achieve self-sufficiency.

Attachment 2 provides a County Self-Diagnostic Tool that is intended to help individual counties focus on their important data and identify county practices that could be improved to increase recipient participation.

Additional information regarding TANF Reauthorization that may be helpful for developing the Plan addendum is contained in the following documents:

- Reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program Interim Final Rule Summary (American Public Human Services Association)
<http://www.aphsa.org/home/Doc/APHSA-Reauthorization-TANF-Program-Interim-Final-Rule.pdf>
- CalWORKs at a Crossroads: The Next Stage of Welfare Reform in California (County Welfare Directors Association)
<http://www.cwda.org/downloads/CountyCalWORKsWhitePaper.pdf>
- Implementing the TANF Changes in the Deficit Reduction Act: "Win-Win" Solutions for Families and States (Center for Law And Social Policy)
<http://www.clasp.org/publications/tanfguide.pdf>
- Analysis of New Interim Final TANF Rules (Center for Law And Social Policy)
http://www.clasp.org/publications/final_tanf_rules_analysis.pdf
- California's Response to Recent TANF Changes Should Preserve the Strengths of the CalWORKs Program (California Budget Project)
http://www.cbp.org/2006/0605_bb_calworks.pdf

The Department intends to use the Plan addenda to identify new promising and best practices to share with other counties. When all counties improve their work participation rates, the chances of avoiding federal penalties increase.

Plan Addendum Elements

Each Plan addendum must provide an overview of how the county will meet the goals of W&I Code Section 10540. These goals are to accomplish 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.

The Plan addendum must include immediate and long-range actions that the county will take to improve work participation rates among CalWORKs applicants and recipients, and must include, at a minimum, all of the following:

- (1) How the county will address increased participation in the following areas:
 - (A) Providing up-front engagement activities.
 - (B) Reengaging noncompliant or sanctioned individuals.
 - (C) Providing activities to encourage participation and to prevent families from going into sanction status.
 - (D) Achieving full engagement by individuals who are required to participate, and who are partially participating, not participating, or are between activities.
 - (E) Other activities designed to increase the county's federal work participation rate.
- (2) A description of how the county will utilize the single allocation and other funding that will be committed to the county's CalWORKs program.
- (3) A description of anticipated outcomes, including the number of families affected, that will result in county program improvements, and the projected impact on the county's federal work participation rate.
- (4) A proposed plan to measure progress in achieving the anticipated outcomes, pursuant to paragraph (3), on a quarterly basis.
- (5) A description of how the county will collaborate with local agencies, including, but not limited to, local workforce investment boards, community colleges, universities, adult schools, and regional occupational centers/programs that provide activities that meet federal work participation requirements and provide participants with skills that will help them achieve long-term self-sufficiency.

In reviewing current policies and developing new procedures or strategies to engage recipients, counties are reminded that applicants cannot be required to participate in WTW activities, including WTW orientation, appraisal, and job search, but they may

participate on a voluntary basis. Furthermore, counties cannot make such participation a condition of eligibility for aid, deny an application for failing to participate during application, or impose WTW sanctions on an applicant, regardless of the applicant's consent to participate in the activities. In accordance with Manual of Policy and Procedures 42-711.112, at the time an individual applies for aid or at the time a recipient's eligibility for aid is determined, counties are required to provide general information regarding WTW activities, supportive services, and qualifying exemptions, and make an initial determination of whether the individual is required to participate in WTW activities. This general information does not take the place of a regular WTW orientation. Counties are required to provide information on WTW to the applicant in writing and orally as necessary, but are reminded that participation in any oral presentation at application would be voluntary for the applicant and cannot be a condition of aid. In addition, counties are reminded that individuals must be provided supportive services in order to participate in assigned program activities (including activities for which the individual is voluntarily participating).

Implementation Timeline

In accordance with the new law, each county must submit a Plan addendum to the Department within 90 days from the date of this letter. In addition to the requirements described in the "Plan Addendum Elements" section above, the addendum must include certification that, prior to submittal, the County Board of Supervisors has been briefed regarding the contents of the addendum. Within 30 days of receipt, the Department will either certify that the addendum includes all necessary elements and that program descriptions are consistent with State law, and to the extent applicable, federal law, or notify the county that the addendum is not complete and/or consistent, and state the reasons. Counties must submit a Plan addendum once every three years.

Although State law requires that counties continue operating CalWORKs WTW programs according to existing Plans until their Plan addenda are approved, the law also allows counties to implement changes that are consistent with the goals of the activities specified in the "Plan Addendum Elements" section above, prior to State certification of the Plan addendum. This will allow program improvements that will assist the State in meeting the federal work participation requirements as soon as possible. However, counties should not change individuals' existing WTW plans to meet federal work participation requirements, unless consistent with individual assessments.

As required in W&I Code Section 10540.6, the Department is required to publish periodic data, no less frequently than quarterly, reported by counties regarding caseload characteristics, welfare to work outcomes, engagement rates, and other outcomes consistent with the Plan addendum and other specified performance outcomes. The Department will be consulting with stakeholders, including CWDA and legislative staff, to develop the data sources, methodology, and format for the data to be published.

County Plan Addendum Instructions

Counties must use Attachment 1 (template) for the submittal of the Plan addendum. When completing the addendum questions, be as specific as possible. Addenda without sufficient information to determine if the county program conforms to State statute and regulations will not be certified by the Department until additional information is provided. Please also remember that in accordance with ACL 00-08, counties must develop written policies and procedures for those sections of the CalWORKs program in which they have operational discretion.

After completion of the Plan addendum, please send an electronic copy to Audrey King at the email address located at the end of this letter. If you are unable to provide an electronic signature on the Plan addendum, the official Plan addendum must also be submitted by mail from the County Welfare Director to Christine Webb-Curtis at the address below:

Christine Webb-Curtis, Chief
Employment Bureau
California Department of Social Services
744 P Street, M.S. 16-33
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Department encourages counties to treat Plan addenda as living documents. If a county finds new strategies are not working, do not hesitate to adjust them and submit an updated Plan addendum.

FUTURE COUNTY PLAN UPDATES

Counties will be requested in the future to update their entire Plan to remove any obsolete requirements, incorporate new requirements (e.g., deleting references to the 18- or 24-month time limit, and adding the core/non-core and universal engagement requirements resulting from Senate Bills 1104 and 68), and integrate into one complete plan any previously approved Plan addenda that are still current. The Plan addendum required by this letter should also be incorporated into any future Plan update. Incorporating previously approved addenda into one Plan will provide the public, other counties, and the Department with a better understanding of how a county's program operates. The Department will be issuing a separate letter with instructions and template in the future.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Audrey King, Program Analyst in the Employment Bureau, at (916) 651-6567, or by email at audrey.king@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed

By

CHARR LEE METSKER

Deputy Director

Welfare To Work Division

c: CWDA
CSAC

Attachment 1: County Plan Addendum Template

Attachment 2: County Self-Diagnostic Tool

COUNTY NAME:

CalWORKs County Plan Addendum

Date Submitted to California Department of Social Services:

Prepared By:

Contact Phone Number:

Contact Email Address:

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:

Printed Name:

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.

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

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.

Providing up-front engagement activities:

Description of policy(ies) or strategy(ies) that will result in program improvement (identify whether this is a new policy/strategy, a current policy/strategy that will continue to be promoted, or an expansion of, or revision to, current policy/strategy). Example: A county describes a new policy to engage recipients in orientation and appraisal within one week of application.

What are the anticipated effects and percentage of families affected monthly? Example: The county describes how recipients are expected to have welfare-to-work (WTW) plans developed sooner and includes how much sooner, what percentage of the county's WTW caseload will be impacted, etc.

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

Example: The county describes the percentage by which the earlier engagement policy will increase the county's federal WPR and State participation levels, the percentage by which a reduction in sanctions will increase the county's federal WPR and its State participation levels, etc., by year, over three years (beginning with this year). The county also describes how early engagement will result in better identification of barriers to employment, better identification of exemptions, etc. (including percentages as appropriate). If the county cannot identify the percentage increase to its WPR for an individual policy/strategy because of overlap with another policy/strategy, the WPR impact can be combined with

other strategies in Section H below

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

Description of policy(ies) or strategy(ies) that will result in program improvement (identify whether this is a new policy/strategy, a current policy/strategy that will continue to be promoted, or an expansion of, or revision to, current policy/strategy). Example: The county describes a new policy to work with recipients up front to identify community service areas in which they have specific personal interest (such as volunteering at a local nonprofit) that could be utilized to increase participation in federally allowable activities when recipients are in between activities or need additional hours to meet the 32-/35-hour weekly participation requirement.

What are the anticipated effects and percentage of families affected monthly? Example: The county describes how the policy benefits recipients and specifies the percent of WTW enrollees who are not participating in activities and the percent who are not fully participating that will become fully engaged in activities that meet federal and State participation requirements (separated by meeting federal and State requirements).

How will success be determined (quantitative and qualitative assessment of effects)? Example: The county describes the percent by which the county's federal WPR and State participation level will be increased by full engagement of partially participating recipients and non-participating recipients. The county describes the percent increase for each group of recipients, separately, by year, over three years (beginning with this year). If the county cannot identify the percentage increase to its WPR for an individual policy/strategy because of overlap with another policy/strategy, the WPR impact can be combined with other strategies in Section H below.

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 (identify whether this is a new policy/strategy, a current policy/strategy that will continue to be promoted, or an expansion of, or revision to, current policy/strategy). Example: A county describes a new strategy that after an instance of noncompliance, individuals will meet with a worker who specializes in identifying and resolving barriers to nonparticipation (substance abuse, child care problems, etc.) and will work with individuals to develop strategies to maintain participation.

What are the anticipated effects and percentage of families affected monthly? Example: The county describes how recipients will benefit from the new policy and identifies the percentage by which the county's sanction rate will be reduced.

How will success be determined (quantitative and qualitative assessment of effects)? Example: The county describes the percent by which sanction prevention will increase the county's federal WPR and State participation levels, by year, over three years (beginning with this year). The county also describes how it will measure the benefits to recipients in terms of barrier removal services. If the county cannot identify the percentage increase to its WPR for an individual policy/strategy because of overlap with another policy/strategy, the WPR impact can be combined with other strategies in Section H below.

Reengaging noncompliant or sanctioned individuals

Description of policy(ies) or strategy(ies) that will result in program improvement (identify whether this is a new policy/strategy, a current policy/strategy that will continue to be promoted, or an expansion of, or revision to, current policy/strategy). Example: A county describes a home visiting program that focuses on re-engaging sanctioned recipients in WTW and removing barriers to participation.

What are the anticipated effects and percentage of families affected monthly? Example: The county describes the percentage by which its sanction rate will be reduced, the percentage of sanctioned individuals that may be identified as meeting a WTW exemption, etc. The county also describes how identification of barriers and the provision of services will assist the family in meeting WTW requirements and achieving self-sufficiency.

How will success be determined (quantitative and qualitative assessment of effects)? Example: The county describes the percentage by which a reduction in its sanction rate will increase the county's federal WPR and its State work participation levels, by year, over three years (beginning with this year), and how the county will measure the benefits to recipients in terms of barrier removal services. If the county cannot identify the percentage increase to its WPR for an individual policy/strategy because of overlap with another policy/strategy, the WPR impact can be combined with other strategies in Section H below.

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

Description of policy(ies) or strategy(ies) that will result in program improvement (identify whether this is a new policy/strategy, a current policy/strategy that will continue to be promoted, or an expansion of, or revision to, current policy/strategy):

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

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

G. Please provide a description of how the county will collaborate with local agencies, including, but not limited to, local workforce investment boards, community colleges, universities, adult schools and regional occupational centers/programs that provide activities that meet federal work participation requirements and provide participants with skills that will help them achieve long-term self-sufficiency. For each individual agency, responses should include elements such as how information is shared or will be shared, ongoing or planned contracts, ongoing meetings established, etc.

Description of policy(ies) or strategy(ies) that will result in program improvement (identify whether this is a new policy/strategy, a current policy/strategy that will continue to be promoted, or an expansion of, or revision to, current policy/strategy). Example: The county describes how it will collaborate with local community colleges to expand the availability of short-term vocational educational programs and increase the number of work study placements for recipients.

What are the anticipated effects and percentage of families affected monthly? Example: The county describes how recipients will benefit through increased availability of vocational education and work study programs in terms of obtaining skills needed to obtain employment that will lead to self-sufficiency, increasing recipients' income while on aid, increasing the percentage of recipients participating in federally allowable activities, etc.

How will success be determined (quantitative and qualitative assessment of effects)? Example: The county describes the percentage by which the county's federal WPR and its State participation levels will increase by year over three years (beginning with this year). The county also describes the amount by which a recipient's annual earnings are expected to increase, the number of families that will leave aid due to employment annually, etc. If the county cannot identify the percentage increase to its WPR for an individual policy/strategy because of overlap with another policy/strategy, the WPR impact can be combined with other strategies in 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 Measures of quarterly progress:

Projected impact on county's federal WPR:

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			
WTW Employment Services			
CalWORKs Child Care			
Cal-Learn			
CalWORKs Funded Mental Health Services			
CalWORKs Funded Substance Abuse Services			
Other			

County Self-Diagnostic Tool

This Self-Diagnostic Tool is optional and is for internal county use only. The tool is intended to help trigger ideas about where to focus county resources by examining areas that represent the greatest challenges to the work participation rate (WPR) and the best opportunity for improvement. Many counties may already have taken many of the approaches that are suggested here. When answering questions, counties are encouraged to examine all available data, and also engage frontline staff in the process.

Before addressing each area, the county may want to stand back and look at who is participating, who is not, and the types of activities in which recipients are participating. The county may also want to review recipient characteristics (e.g., primary language, race, etc.) to identify trends that should be further analyzed.

What does the county's caseload look like today?

1. Number of new applications
2. Number of individuals who are exempt
3. Number of individuals in good cause status, including child care good cause
4. Number of individuals with domestic violence waivers
5. Number of individuals in non-compliance and sanction status
6. Length of time individuals remain in sanction status (sanctioned families now count in the federal WPR after three months of being sanctioned)
7. Number of individuals in sanction status who are working
8. Number of non-exempt individuals not participating
9. Number of non-exempt individuals who are not participating between activities
10. Number of non-exempt individuals participating, but less than 32 hours (35 hours if two-parent family)
11. Number of individuals in education/training programs
 - a) Short-term (12 months or less) vocational education programs
 - b) Longer term education programs
 - c) Adult education programs, including English as a Second Language (ESL)
 - d) Self-initiated programs (SIPs)
12. Number of individuals in the safety net who are working [20 hours per week for single custodial parents with a child under six, 30 hours for other single-parent families, or 35 hours for two-parent families (safety net families now count in the federal WPR)]
13. Number of individuals leaving aid due to employment

Providing up-front engagement activities

1. Could the county shorten the time between application and scheduling a welfare-to-work (WTW) orientation, appraisal, and job club and actual attendance at these activities (including no shows, rescheduling, etc)?
2. Should the county combine the application interview and the WTW orientation on the same day? Would this be cost-effective when taking into consideration the county's application denial rate and the fact that WTW orientation cannot be a condition of eligibility?
3. Could the county improve the process used to ensure individuals know the next steps they must take after applying for aid [e.g., having applicants leave the initial eligibility appointment or WTW orientation with their next appointment date and a checklist of what they need to do (and whom to talk to about doing that) before their next appointment]?

4. Should the county look at how applicants/recipients are informed of supportive services and whether they receive them promptly (this applies to all stages of participation)? Do applicants/recipients leave initial eligibility or WTW orientation appointment with information about funding for child care, transportation, and advance pay?
5. Could the county reduce its no-show rate for upfront activities? Should on-site child care for application, orientation, appraisal, and job club be provided?
6. Could the county improve how working applicants are made aware of accommodations from the first day in the office to ensure they retain employment (e.g., after hours appointments, supportive services)?
7. Could the county streamline the WTW orientation and flow process for individuals who have previously been on aid while ensuring applicants/recipients are appropriately served?
8. Can the sharing of information between and among eligibility, WTW, and child care staff be improved to more quickly and smoothly move individuals from application to initial WTW activities and other areas of participation (this applies to all stages of participation)?
9. Would it be helpful to reemphasize to eligibility staff the importance of work and WTW participation, both to individuals and to the county?
10. Could the county improve on promoting the importance of work and WTW participation to applicants and recipients in orientation, appraisal, and job club activities?
11. Would it help to revisit how WTW staff consider the receipt of child support in self-sufficiency planning and how WTW staff know if a recipient is receiving the child support disregard?
12. Could the county better encourage the voluntary participation of exempt recipients (within any medical limitations) and non-mandatory second parents to participate and ensure they receive supportive services?

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

1. Would it be helpful for workers to regularly encourage and support recipients? Should they contact recipients more frequently to see how they are doing?
2. Could the county look at how quickly third party assessments are held when recipients disagree with their assessments and how quickly the WTW worker gets the results of the third party assessment? Should this process be expedited to improve participation?
3. Is there room for improvement in the scheduling of good cause appointments?
 - a) Is the appointment timing so tight from the date of the notice that it results in high non-attendance rates?
 - b) Is there a long time between the date of noncompliance and the date the notice is sent?
 - c) Does the appointment time accommodate individuals who are employed or in school?
4. Should the county reexamine its processes for reviewing cases in good cause beyond 30 days?
5. Could the county improve how WTW workers address substance abuse, mental illness, or domestic abuse problems to remove these barriers to participation? Should specialists be available to work with these individuals, or should substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence counselors be located on site? Should multi-disciplinary teams be established to address these barriers?
6. Could the county strengthen its work with local advocates and recipients to obtain suggestions and advice for program improvement (e.g., focus groups, advisory groups)?
7. Should recipients who work also be encouraged to obtain education or training to help them advance in the workforce and obtain self-sufficiency?

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

A. Why are recipients not participating or partially participating?

1. Is it due to a lack of jobs or full-time employment?
2. Is it due to lack of job skills?
3. Is it due to lack of a full range of appropriate activities?
4. Is it due to training or education schedules?
5. Is it due to lack of supportive services or experiencing behavioral health problems or a disability?
6. Is it due to recipient criminal records?
7. Are there other reasons for partial or non-participation?

In addition to what has been previously identified to encourage participation, what could the county do to address non-participation and partial participation?

1. Could the county expand apprenticeship programs, subsidized employment, subsidized on-the-job training (OJT), and community service programs to place non-participating recipients and/or address partial participation?
2. Should the county contract, or expand its contract, with the local community college, workforce investment board, regional occupational program/center, or adult education provider to place recipients and/or address partial participation?
3. Should the county consider adding job skills training and vocational ESL programs for recipients who are working in low paying, part-time jobs?
4. Should the county consider, for participants in education, adding or expanding work study or internships?
5. Should the county consider developing an expungement program for recipients with criminal records?
6. Should the county maintain a list of local employers who are willing to hire recipients with barriers or criminal records?

B. Why are recipients not participating between activities?

1. Is it because of an educational activity that begins only at the semester or quarter, or a training class with similar start times?
2. Is it because of county staffing that hinders planning and scheduling?
3. Is it because an activity ended without a plan for the next activity to start?
4. Is it because recipients are losing jobs and WTW staff do not find out about it in a timely manner?
5. Is it because recipients are waiting for assessments, WTW plan development, third party assessment, or child care?
6. Is it because recipients drop out of classes and the WTW staff are not timely made aware of it?
7. Are there other reasons for individuals being between activities?

In addition to what has been previously identified to encourage participation, what could the county do to address time between activities?

1. Could the county develop or expand open entry/open exit classes with providers?
2. Could the county develop or expand a job readiness program that focuses on soft skills such as time management/budgeting, and also on mental health and substance abuse issues, etc.?

3. What “bridging” activities that would help recipients and would fill time between activities (life skills classes, community service, etc.) could be developed or accessed?
4. Could the county encourage recipients to volunteer full-time between activities in a community service project in which they are interested and which would provide a learning experience related to their job/career goals?
5. Should the county re-direct staff to address planning and scheduling (e.g., staff that specialize in “tracking” cases to ensure they are continually and fully engaged)?
6. Should the county develop or change regular check-in times to make sure that the recipient is on track or to identify if the activity/job will be ending?
7. Should the county change how providers track recipients and report back?

Re-engaging noncompliant or sanctioned individuals

1. Should the county schedule appointments to resolve non-compliance more promptly?
2. What could the county do to have workers readily available to respond to noncompliant or sanctioned individuals’ calls and to ensure individuals know whom to contact?
3. Should the county assign WTW workers and/or specialized staff to sanctioned cases?
4. Should the county reexamine its process to ensure that recipients who are having problems with their workers know how to escalate the issues (e.g., ombudsman)?
5. Should the recommended form “Request to Stop a WTW Sanction” (WTW 31) be used?
6. Should the county conduct WTW home visits, or expand an existing WTW home visit program, to encourage compliance or determine if intervention is needed to get the individual to re-engage?
7. Should the county reexamine its process to ensure non-compliant and sanctioned recipients understand why they are in non-compliance or sanction status and the benefits of work/participation?
8. Should the county do more to ensure that WTW workers and recipients are clear on what is needed to cure sanctions?
9. Should the county ask sanctioned individuals why they choose to stay in sanction status and evaluate what can be done to address the common answers/issues?

Other activities designed to increase the county’s federal work participation rate

What Staffing and Staff Training Programs are in Place?

1. Should the county consider using specialized staff to focus on issuing supportive services and/or getting new recipients quickly into activities?
2. Should the county reexamine its staff training to strengthen the focus on what recipients can do, consistent with program goals and recipient goals?
3. Should the county have job developer staff to reach out to the community and work closely with local employers to determine employer needs (and then develop customized programs to fill those needs)? Could marketing of recipients be improved?
4. Should the county reexamine its staff training to strengthen staff familiarity with interpersonal relations, behavioral health intervention, State regulations, employment appraisals, the local labor market, etc.?
5. Should the county develop training to ensure that staff know TANF Reauthorization changes and requirements, and the implications for county policies?
6. Should the county consider new ways to motivate staff by celebrating or recognizing accomplishments (recipients placed in jobs, recipients going off aid due to employment, recipients successfully completing educational component)?

What kind of accountability/management systems does the county have in place?

1. In completing the federal Q5 sample and WTW 30, should the county review case files and talk to workers to identify participation that may not be identified in its automated systems?
2. Could the county better utilize results of the monthly WTW 30 case review or review information in its automated systems to identify potential ways to increase work participation?
3. Should the county review and measure WPRs of various caseloads by worker, by section, by field office, and/or by district?
4. Should the county measure other factors for worker/manager performance and clearly establish performance goals/requirements? How is "success" or "good performance" determined?
5. Should the county consider, or reconsider, the frequency by which performance measurement information is made available?
6. Are interventions/program changes tested prior to being expanded in the county and changed when they do not work?

Other

1. Should the county consider establishing memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with employers (county pays for training at local community college, and employer agrees to hire afterwards)?
2. Could the county improve its follow-up with no shows (through telephone contact, written documents, or home visits)?
3. Should the county reexamine its system to inform WTW staff when recipients are also in the child welfare services (CWS) system? Should there be better coordination with the CWS staff in order to reinforce expectations and accommodate CWS requirements (and vice versa)?

A description of how the county will collaborate with local agencies, including, but not limited to, local workforce investment boards, community colleges, adult education, and regional occupational centers/programs that provide activities that meet federal work participation requirements and provide participants with skills that will help them achieve long-term self-sufficiency.

1. Is there something the county could do to enhance coordination and work more collaboratively with local providers? Should agreements or MOUs be put in place or reviewed to support collaboration now that increased participation is the focus? Should more short-term training programs or other activities (i.e., bridging activities) that will meet local labor market and participant needs be promoted within these MOUs? Note: Community colleges received additional funding in the budget (\$8 million for work study and \$1 million for job development).
2. Should the county and provider reexamine the success of its information sharing to ensure resources for recipients are maximized and services not duplicated (e.g., sharing WTW plans)? If confidentiality is an issue, should the county address this with waivers or consult with county counsel to determine what information can be shared with providers? Does staff know what information can be shared?
3. Should the county review what is received from providers to document an individual's participation in WTW plan-related activities in light of the new documentation and daily supervision requirements in federal regulations?
4. Should the county expand on-site training classes (job skills, English as a Second Language, etc.) with providers?