



Transforming CalWORKs Implementation Updates: Fall 2026

Since Senate Bill (SB) 119 was enacted in July 2025, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has advanced key milestones leading to meaningful, family-centered reforms within the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program.

Community Input

CDSS, in partnership with Mathematica and the Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC), hosts ongoing engagement sessions with key partners.

- The Transforming CalWORKs Advisory Committee (TCAC), consisting of current and past CalWORKs parents, county staff, education, workforce, tribal partners, and advocates, has met 15 times to advise CDSS on effectively incorporating the initiative's vision into each reform.
- Over 40 CalWORKs Implementation Collaborative (CWIC) meetings have occurred with county frontline staff and leaders to discuss how the TCAC's recommendations can be implemented locally.
- Parent and county focus groups have informed various new resources under development.

Rescue Agency conducted listening sessions with county staff as part of their statewide communication campaign to generate excitement and shared understanding among county workers.

Supporting County Implementation

Six All County Letters (ACLs) were published to inform counties of the changes occurring through Transforming CalWORKs and provide instructions on the policy changes taking effect. Corresponding webinars were also held to assist with local implementation.

- [ACL 25-78](#): Overview of Reforms
- [ACL 25-77](#): Elimination of the Research and Development Enterprise Project and Enterprise II Lite County Case Sampling Workload (effective July 1, 2025)
- [ACL 25-74](#): Elimination of the Work Participation Rate Penalty Pass-Through (effective October 1, 2025)
- [ACL 26-28](#): Changes to Welfare to Work (WTW) Noncompliance Sanctions and Curing (multiple effective dates)
- [ACL 26-31](#): Advanced Transportation Payments (effective July 1, 2026)
- [ACL 26-32](#): Job Search as a WTW Choice (effective July 1, 2026)

The University of California, Davis (UCD) announced a statewide training and practice support program to help counties implement the Transforming CalWORKs

initiative and promote consistent, family-focused engagement and service delivery across counties. Motivational interviewing, Trauma-Informed Practice, and the Neuroscience of Trauma trainings will be available at no cost for county workers beginning in October 2026.

The California Statewide Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS) collaborates directly with CDSS and counties to automate the SB 119 changes as guidance is released.

Looking Ahead

Beginning Fall 2026, the CDSS will collaborate with CFPIC to provide open forum discussion sessions for counties to ask questions about policy guidance already in effect.

Updated resources are in development for the new participant-centered WTW flow, including the statewide orientation, appraisal, and WTW plan. This includes a new WTW plan form, revisions to the participant WTW handbook, online orientation videos, and a shortened appraisal tool to replace the Online CalWORKs Appraisal Tool (OCAT). The tools will be piloted with counties and participants beginning in late 2026. Learnings from the pilots will help inform CalSAWS automation in 2027.

Rescue Agency will develop a comprehensive toolkit, branded assets, and videos informed by learnings from the listening sessions and CWIC feedback. These resources will be available to counties in Spring 2027.

UCD will further develop training opportunities – along with various tools, materials, and other resources – based on needs expressed by county staff, with a focus on situating broader practice concepts within the context of Senate Bill 119 reforms and the statewide culture shift central to Transforming CalWORKs. This effort will also include a Training-for-Trainers program to leverage existing training capacity within counties.

Stay up to date on trainings and practice support offerings, access toolkits, and more at the [UC Davis Transforming CalWORKs website](#).

An evaluation plan has been developed to measure our success. The plan highlights key CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review metrics and increases participant feedback through the Client Satisfaction Survey.



The CDSS extends a heartfelt thanks to all our internal and external partners engaged in Transforming CalWORKs. We look forward to the milestones we'll continue to achieve together.

For updates regarding the CDSS Transforming CalWORKs efforts, please sign up for our newsletter via the QR Code. For questions, please email TransformingCalWORKs@dss.ca.gov.

