

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

Mendocino County

Visit Date: July 16, 2014

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

Mendocino 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] X44 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' goals are to ensure that SB 1041 is being implemented correctly by each CWD, to gather promising practices in regards to implementation, to share these promising practices (when able) amongst all CWDs throughout the state, and to determine 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. If such issues exist, they will be addressed by the SB 1041 Oversight Workgroup.

County Visit General Information

The one-day field visit was performed in Mendocino County on Wednesday, July 16, 2014 at the CalWORKs Job Services – Mendocino Room in Ukiah, CA. The field visit team included one manager and two staff members from the CDSS, Welfare-to-Work Division, CalWORKs Employment and Eligibility Branch along with the Mendocino County Program Manager, Program Specialist, and two Employment Services Representatives. The field visit consisted of a kick-off meeting, close-out meeting, staff interviews, and case management observations with county staff.

Implementation Strategies

Mendocino County implemented the SB 1041 related program changes in phases as All County Letters (ACLs) were released by the CDSS and provided county staff with multiple instructional notices and flyers. Staff trainings were completed through four in-house trainings. Mendocino County developed training materials, written materials (handouts), PowerPoint materials, revised WTW orientation presentations, and the Program Specialist provided ongoing resources via email and memos.

Successes

Mendocino County's community outreach is a great resource for current and new clients. A promising practice used to demonstrate the county's community outreach connections is the Nutritional Specialist that gives lessons during Orientation on how to shop for groceries to get the maximum amount of food for the lowest cost. Mendocino County also provides one-time only incentives such as a \$50 voucher to clients that attend five workshops and a \$150 voucher to clients who meet their required participation hours for two consecutive months.

Key Recommendations

Mendocino County may benefit from developing new ways to reach out to sanctioned clients, such as utilizing letters with more variation, or sending flyers when there is no response to letters. Mendocino County should continue to strive for a close partnership with Mendocino Community College, and is encouraged to get involved in the Work Study Program. It is also strongly recommended that Mendocino County gives consideration to the Expanded Subsidized Employment program, and utilizes those available funds as an additional resource for CalWORKs clients.

Acknowledgments

The CDSS thanks Mendocino County 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

Mendocino At-a-glance

Total Caseload.....	1,328
<small>(Source: CalWORKs Cash Grant Caseload Movement Report CA 237 CW Line Item 8-May 2014)</small>	
WTW Enrollees.....	577
<small>(Source: CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Monthly Activity Report WTW 25/25A Line Item 1-May 2014)</small>	
Mandatory Participants (enrollees + sanctioned + non-compliance).....	880
<small>(Source: CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Monthly Activity Report WTW 25/25A Line Items 1, 3A, and 31-May 2014)</small>	
Reengagement Plan Received.....	Yes

Beginning Date of Reengagement.....January 17, 2013
Consortium System.....C-IV

Data/Statistics:

- Clients 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: 113.
- Clients 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: 255.
- Sanctions that were cured as a result of SB 1041: None.
- Former short-term young child exempt clients (Assembly Bill [AB] X4 4) that have been reengaged: 166.
- WTW plans that have changed as a result of SB 1041 implementation: Approximately 46 from the “Active” caseloads was changed as of June 2013.
- Clients that have used the new once in a lifetime young child exemption: Mendocino County indicated as of June 2014, there were 107 clients receiving the new once in a lifetime young child exemption. In addition, approximately 20 of these clients have chosen to volunteer to actively participate in the WTW program during their exemption.
- Other statistics that the county is keeping related to SB 1041 implementation:
 - ❖ Mendocino County indicated that they have monitored their county’s Work Participation Rate (WPR), and noted an increase in the preliminary WPR for FFY 2013/2014 since SB 1041 implementation. They believe the increase is in part due to the reengagement of previously exempt clients as well as the new hourly requirements.

Summary of Documents provided by Mendocino County:

- Instructional announcements provided to county staff relevant to SB 1041 implementation.
- Informing notices and flyers provided to clients relevant to SB 1041 implementation.
- SB 1041 related training materials (formal and informal) including but not limited to training presentations, training practice scenarios, flyers provided to staff, and materials distributed during staff meetings.
- Mendocino County’s Reengagement Sequencing Plan.

County Administrator and Caseworker Interviews

The CDSS Field Monitoring Team used the county administrator and caseworker interview tools released in All County Information Notice (ACIN) I-42-13 to interview the county administrator and case workers in-person regarding SB 1041 implementation. The tools were provided to the county administrator and caseworkers in advance of the visit. The administrator interview panel consisted of two CDSS staff with two) county administrators. The caseworker interviews were conducted by three CDSS staff members with two caseworkers.

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

Mendocino County sent out the New Rules for CalWORKs WTW Activities (CW 2205) form using the Statewide Automated Welfare System Consortium-IV (C-IV) on November 9, 2012 to all non-excluded WTW eligible adults, both English and Spanish speaking, who received cash aid on behalf of or with a child, including sanctioned adults and clients with a current young child exemption.

Comprehensive discussions with clients with less than 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit began on January 2, 2013, for 255 clients, all of which have been completed.

In general, clients were choosing the lower hourly requirements and those who were in vocational education training programs beyond 12 months were choosing to continue in those programs without participating in additional activities.

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

Mendocino County began comprehensive discussions with clients with more than 24 months left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit on January 2, 2013, for 113 clients, all of which have been completed. Clients are choosing a wide variety of flexible options on a case-by-case basis.

Clients who failed to attend SB 1041 appointments

Mendocino County made contact with all active clients regarding the comprehensive discussion and new participation requirements at either their next scheduled appointment, by phone, when the client came into the office to pick up supportive services, or the next time the client needed to sign a new WTW Plan Activity Assignment (WTW 2) form. For employed clients meeting new participation requirements who failed to attend their scheduled SB 1041 appointment, the new WTW 2 was mailed to the client with a note to contact their ESR, complete the new WTW 2, and return it in the postage paid envelope.

General Comments

Mendocino County currently handles over 1,020 active cases, out of 1,400-1,500 total CalWORKs cases. The office in Ukiah handles the majority of the caseload, while fewer are handled by the Fort Bragg and Willits offices. The WTW 24-Month Time Clock requirements are discussed at Orientation and at Appraisal. Caseworkers review the CalWORKs 48-month time limit and the WTW 24-Month Time Clock, as well as a client's eligibility for exemptions or good cause, prior to developing the WTW plan. This gives the client the ability to fully utilize the county's services while making the most out of their time on aid.

Mendocino County caseworkers have expressed frustration and confusion regarding implementation of the WTW 24-Month Time Clock requirement and attempting to explain the changes to clients. In addition to having a shortage of staff, caseworkers felt overwhelmed with all the changes. County staff felt the limited time to learn the new changes was not sufficient for a full accurate implementation.

Comprehensive discussions began on January 1, 2013. The county utilized an "all hands on deck" approach with a deadline of June 30, 2013, for sending out letters for re-appraisals. Overtime was authorized and used by each staff worker. If clients did not respond to the first letter, a second letter was sent out to make contact. Each client was allowed to reschedule their meeting one time. Comprehensive discussions were completed by the given deadline of June 30, 2013.

Many clients have chosen to use the new SB 1041 WTW options, such as the lower hourly requirements and the WTW 24-Month Time Clock flexibility. Some clients with a child under six have changed their WTW plans from the previously required 32 hours per week to the new 20 hours per week requirement.

Some clients are in a 12-month vocational education program and have changed their WTW plan to utilize the WTW 24-Month Time Clock in order to avoid having to meet a core hourly requirement.

New Young Child Exemption

Mendocino County reported 107 clients that have opted to take the new young child exemption as of September 23, 2013. Few sanctions were cured due to the new young child exemption and/or new program flexibility.

General Comments

Mendocino County does a very steady job of informing clients of the process, and the breakdown of options for the new young child exemption. County caseworkers explain the new young child exemptions to all clients after orientation. In addition, the county has approximately 20 clients who have elected to volunteer to actively participate in the WTW program during their exemption.

The new WTW Plan Activity Assignment (WTW 2)

County staff utilized the form beginning January 2, 2013 and explained the new requirements using the CW 2205. Staff also referred to internal informational notices and made journal entries within C-IV using a checklist provided in the county handbook. The new WTW 2 was available within C-IV for use by March 2013.

General Comments

Mendocino County caseworkers received four in-house trainings on the new changes of the WTW 24-Month Time Clock and the WTW 2 plan. Caseworkers use the new WTW 2 to explain requirements, exemptions, activities, etc. to clients. Caseworkers like that supportive services are listed in detail on the new form, along with a space for comments to add activities that are not readily available in C-IV.

When asked about the WTW 2 form itself, caseworkers would like to see a bigger space for clients to initial and date. Caseworkers also suggested a possible combination of the Action Plan with the Activity Plan, so clients are able to see everything in one document.

Reengagement Process

Mendocino County's reengagement process officially began on January 17, 2013. The Reengagement Informing Notice (CW 2206) form mass mailer was sent on January 17, 2013 to all AB X4 4 short-term exempt individuals. As of January 2013, Mendocino County had approximately 240 remaining clients to reengage. Mendocino County completed reengagement of these clients in January 2014.

Mendocino County's Sequencing Plan was as follows:

- **January 17, 2013**-Volunteers; clients that are partially participating, clients that are potentially eligible for the 0-23 exemption
- **April 15, 2013**-Two-parent households with one exempt parent
- **July 15, 2013**-Those with the least amount of time left on their CalWORKs 48-month time limit
- **October 14, 2013**-All others

Mendocino County's reengagement process began with the Program Specialist, who reviewed cases to determine which clients needed to be reengaged. The Program Specialist then updated the Work Registration record when the client was sent their Reengagement Notice. The notice included the Orientation time and date, which indicated that the client was officially considered as reengaged. The WTW 24-Month Time Clock did not begin to tick until the initial Job Search/Assessment period was completed and a WTW plan signed.

Reengagement has been completed since January 2014. All clients who have responded have been notified and the comprehensive discussions have been completed. Caseworkers informed clients that their exemptions would end when they began participating, and that the required participation hours would need to be met. Caseworkers informed all clients in their caseload about the date they would be required to be reengaged.

Implementation Strategies

Mendocino County implemented the SB 1041 related program changes in phases as All County Letters (ACLs) were released by the CDSS. County staff was kept informed of the changes via meetings, emails, trainings, and resource materials. County staff was assigned special projects throughout implementation in order to effectively review the cases, take any required actions, and provide required informing notices to clients.

The following trainings were completed for Mendocino County staff:

- Employment Services staff received four in-house training sessions, for a total of 12 hours of training per worker.
- Training materials were developed by the county, along with the training aid provided in ACIN 1-08-13, and a CDSS slideshow that was shared with the county.
- Caseworkers informed clients of the WTW 24-Month Time Clock requirements at Orientation and Appraisal.

Mendocino County provided staff with handouts, training aids, and instruction in various formats. Information and resources were provided to staff via e-mail, in-house trainings, unit meetings, and they have also been saved on to a shared computer drive for workers to access. During monthly meetings, time is allowed for questions or issues that require clarification on any related SB 1041 changes.

The county incorporated a unique strategy to help caseworkers stay tuned in to the new changes. During a unit meeting, SB 1041 Bingo was played to quiz staff and provide a fun opportunity to review changes.

General Comments

Mendocino County developed their own training materials and also included the CDSS's Training Aid. Eligibility staff did not receive training directly but had access to the county handbook material, were informed of all the new WTW program changes at stand-up staff meetings, and at bi-weekly unit staff meetings. County staff is able to contact their Supervisors and Program Specialist at any time with questions when assistance is needed.

Case Reviews

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

There were five specific case types requested:

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

General Comments

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

- *All clients received the CW 2205 on November 9, 2012. The WTW 24-Month Time Clock (CW 2208) form had been issued to all clients except for one (the case that was Less than or equal to 24-Months on CW 48-Month time limit).*
- *Comprehensive discussions were being noted within the case files and the new WTW 2 was being used and kept on file. Short and long term goals were reflected in the cases.*
- *One client opted to take advantage of the new lower hourly requirement of 20 hours per week for an adult with a child under six years of age.*
- *A learning disability screening was offered to all cases but was declined by all clients.*
- *Supportive services offered and issued were documented in case files.*

Conclusion

Successes

Mendocino County has very effective tools and resources that are helpful to the staff and clients. Three of the following cities within the county all have CalWORKs services with staff on board: Ukiah, Willits, and Fort Bragg. The Ukiah office is part of a one-stop consortia and has 19 agency partners readily available to assist clients and staff. On site is a Behavioral Health worker who can provide referrals to Mental Health and Substance Abuse services. This worker is part of the Behavioral Health and Recovery Services division of Mendocino County's Health and Human Services Agency. The worker will respond to referrals that are made by the caseworker based on the client's request or an indication that mental health and/or substance abuse is an issue and will refer the client for an assessment. The assessment and treatment plan for the client that will be incorporated into their WTW plan. The county also has a Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Advocate. The SSI Advocate handles 44 CalWORKs clients in her caseload.

These clients have been exempt or disabled for a year or more and are referred to the SSI Advocate by their caseworker to obtain assistance with applying for SSI. She assists each client during the SSI application and/or appeals process.

Mendocino County also has case conferencing twice per month, which gives staff an opportunity to bring resources together to talk about cases. Discussions may include sharing information regarding the participant's progress, successes, difficulties, exemptions, sanctions, and one-parent or two-parent circumstances. On Wednesdays at 4:00 PM, the county has a Sanction Engagement session, during which clients that are sanctioned can come in and speak with a caseworker. At least one sanctioned client shows weekly, allowing three to five sanctions to be lifted each month. Mendocino County's case management is very organized and thorough. Each case is well documented in C-IV with journal style notes pertaining to each CalWORKs client.

Mendocino County has an excellent incentive program. Any client that attends five workshops at the Ukiah office receives a \$50 voucher. Any client that meets their required hours of participation for two consecutive months receives a \$150 voucher. Both are one-time only incentives and each voucher can be applied toward items such as food, gas, or clothes. The county offers assistance with transportation by covering auto insurance, registration, and tires. The county has done a terrific job with completing their comprehensive discussions on time.

Mendocino County maintains great community outreach contacts within its community. During Orientation, the county brings in a Nutritional Specialist to demonstrate how to prepare a health, low-cost snack and shares tips on how to grocery shop to get the maximum number of meals for the lowest cost.

Challenges

Mendocino County noted some struggles with the C-IV system and its technical abilities during one-on-one meetings with clients. Currently, approximately 5 percent of the county's WTW clients are Spanish speaking and the county only has one bi-lingual worker to assist with translating. Transportation issues are frequent and ongoing in outlying areas such as Willits, Fort Bragg, and Covelo. There is limited public transportation, as the county has only one busing system and a few taxis or "dial-a-rides". Many clients living in Covelo and the northern part of the county are currently receiving "good cause due to lack of transportation". In Ukiah, the main issue with public transportation is that it does not transport to the local County Office of Education where the Regional Occupations Program is located. Ukiah's main bus schedule runs: Mon-Fri: 7a.m. to 11 p.m. Sat: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Willits and Fort Bragg only have Mon-Fri service running between 7 a.m.-6 p.m. This severely limits a client's ability to work non-traditional hours, which most entry level positions within the county require, including evening and weekend shifts.

Key Recommendations

Mendocino County has some opportunities in taking advantage of the Expanded Subsidized Employment program to create jobs within the unpaid work experience slots. Sanction outreach in different fashions is highly recommended. This would consist of possibly modifying notices, or using a marketing approach with sanctioned clients. Mendocino County is encouraged to consider acquiring a Family Stabilization Case Manager to help with identifying and assisting those families in need. The county currently has great ongoing community outreach. Embracing the relationship with the local community college may improve services for clients attending or planning to attend

school. In addition, this relationship could lead to a possible ongoing work study program connection.

Contact

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