

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

CalWORKS County Plan Addendum

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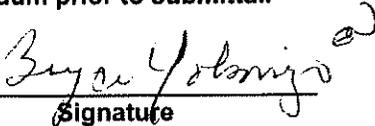
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I hereby certify that County Board Supervisors was briefed regarding the contents of this Plan addendum prior to submittal.

Bryce Yokomizo
County Welfare Director's
Printed Name


Signature

12/13/06
Briefing Date

1) County Goals

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

The overall goal of the Los Angeles County CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Program is to improve the lives of children and families and help them to become self-sufficient.

To achieve this goal, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) will offer an array of services, including employment services, behavioral health services, and supportive services designed to lift families out of poverty and reduce dependence on government benefits. Los Angeles County is working toward ensuring that all participants are served in ways which will facilitate access to activities and supportive services.

Los Angeles County has and will continue to collaborate with its many community partners in not only the development of this Plan Addendum but in carrying out the many new or expanded activities which are outlined.

2) Participation Improvement

B. Providing up-front engagement activities

Los Angeles County is implementing strategies designed to increase employment and participation in work activities. The new policies/strategies include the following:

NEW POLICIES/IMMEDIATE

1. Increase participation up-front by:

- combining Orientation and Job Club sessions to reduce the time lag between components and increase the likelihood of participation;
- adding Job Club sessions to ensure Job Club begins each week, bringing more people into the program more quickly, thereby increasing participation; and
- expediting linkage to supportive services for those parents already participating in an activity and for whom Orientation and Job Club might not be applicable or required.

In 2005, the average time between Orientation and actual attendance at Job Club was 33 days. Combining Orientation and Job Club will eliminate the gap between components, increasing the likelihood of participation in Orientation and Job Club.

2. Assign designated case managers in each region, with toll-free telephone numbers, to:

- assist participants with scheduling and rescheduling Orientation appointments to increase efficiency and customer service satisfaction;
- contact participants with expiring exemptions to explain the advantage and the opportunity of engaging swiftly in GAIN, to renew exemptions that are needed and explain benefits of being an exempt volunteer; and
- assist sanctioned participants to reenter GAIN more quickly, also addressing any barriers they may have, such as child care, learning disabilities, etc.

Having designated case managers for these functions will help participants to eliminate many issues which cause gaps between activities. Specialized assistance and interaction from a designated case manager will address barriers and provide assistance and resources so that all participants can engage in GAIN sooner.

3. Conduct a drawing for gift certificates for participants who complete Orientation. There will be three drawings/gift certificates at each Orientation at each site. This will provide an incentive to more participants to attend and complete Orientation.

Offering a gift certificate as an incentive will help motivate participants to attend Orientation and, as a result, increase the show rate for Orientation and the likelihood of continued participation.

4. The Home Interview Program (HIP) Worker will provide applicants information on the benefits of GAIN during the home visit. The HIP Worker will also explore any potential barriers that may keep individuals from participating.

With the applicant's permission, the HIP Worker will:

- explain the Welfare-to-Work process, including information on the GAIN orientation appointment, child care, transportation, good cause, potential exemptions, and education/training and self-initiated programs;
- explain non-compliance and sanctions; and
- assist the participant in selecting a date for his/her Appraisal/Orientation appointment.

To ensure the HIP workers are successful, they will receive training focused on motivational interviewing, availability of services, and the GAIN philosophy which emphasizes employment, education/training, specialized supportive services, and other welfare-to-work activities, including supportive services. The training will also address good cause and exemptions, as well as ways to prevent the imposition of sanctions.

Providing an applicant with one-on-one information on the WTW process during the initial home visit and assisting in the scheduling of the Appraisal/Orientation appointment will help the applicant in understanding the program components, participation requirements and the relevance of participating.

5. Increase access to child care by:

- having the HIP worker refer participant requests for child care to Child Care Coordinators prior to Orientation to facilitate participants connecting with Resource & Referral agencies and with child care providers earlier. The Child Care Coordinators will play more of a hands on role in assisting participants to connect with the R&Rs/APPs to ensure that the child care paperwork is completed;
- piloting the purchase of short-term child care slots at DPSS Child Care Centers to make short-term child care readily available; and
- piloting a system with the Resource and Referral/Alternative Payment Program agencies to provide enhanced referrals to licensed child care providers who provide short-term child care and expedite processing of short-term child care requests.

Child care is one of the main barriers participants have identified for not participating

in GAIN. Addressing this need will increase participation.

6. Increase access to transportation by implementing a pilot that provides money for a one-day bus pass (\$3.00) for transportation (in advance of the Orientation and Appraisal appointment). This will ensure participants have transportation for the first day, after which they will be engaged in an activity and will receive regular transportation funds in advance of participation.

Providing participants the means for transportation in advance of their scheduled appointments will remove transportation barriers to attendance.

Anticipated Effects and Outcomes

With these new strategies, Los Angeles County projects an increase in up-front engagement. Starting with the application/home visit, telephone outreach, redesigned Orientation and Job Club, and increased access to supportive services, DPSS will be seeking to increase up-front engagement. Research reflects that persons who complete orientation are less likely to fall into noncompliance/sanction, going on to succeed in the program. This up-front engagement will result in earlier and better identification of a participant's barriers for participation, allowing GAIN Services Workers (GSWs) to provide or address the barriers in a more effective and timely manner.

With increased up-front engagement, DPSS expects, cumulatively, an additional 1,800 families (3% of the mandatory WTW caseload) to participate in GAIN. The success of these strategies will be measured by tracking the Orientation show rate, Job Club completion rate, number of transportation issuances, the percentage of WTW plans signed in 90 days, and increased WPR.

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

Los Angeles County is exploring ways to engage participants who are currently participating part-time in a greater number of hours in activities appropriate for each participant. Two new policies that will enable the County to engage a greater number of participants are:

NEW POLICIES/IMMEDIATE

1. Contact all participants at least monthly (by phone or face-to-face) to discuss monthly progress, including an educational plan review, if appropriate. Ensure that all eligible requested services, such as ancillary, transportation, child care, specialized supportive services, and learning disability needs are resolved timely. This provides participants with assistance from the GSW as an issue/barrier arises, such as stable housing and/or family issues.

The monthly contact will allow for identifying needs and barriers encountered by participants and resolving them. It will also enhance the process to obtain documentation in order to meet the required documentation standards. Monthly contact will not create mandatory face-to-face meetings to disrupt participation in educational or other activities.

2. Monitor/track all cases that have been between activities for 30 days or more. This will be done by producing a report that will be reviewed by line staff weekly in order to take action to re-engage participants.

Currently, participants may be between activities and having a report to identify these cases will provide a tool for line staff to take corrective action.

Anticipated Effects and Outcomes:

Los Angeles County expects that both policies will contribute to an increase in full engagement. By contacting participants monthly, GSWs will be able to continuously address and resolve barriers that would otherwise negatively affect the participant's full engagement and continuous participation. Also, the monthly tracking report will readily identify persons who are not fully engaged, allowing GSWs to take prompt corrective actions and decreasing the time gap between activities. Currently, this time gap most frequently occurs out of Orientation. Therefore, by decreasing these time lags, the County will see an increase in the number of WTW plans signed within 90 days.

By addressing full engagement issues, DPSS expects, cumulatively, an additional 2,280 families (3.8% of the mandatory WTW caseload) to fully participate in GAIN. The success of these two strategies will be measured by tracking the percentage of WTW plans signed in 90 days, the number of cases between components for 30 days or more, and increased WPR.

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

EXPANSION/IMMEDIATE

1. Make automated system changes to delay the deregistration of sanctioned cases for 15 days. This enables the participant to resolve any pending issues or provide needed documentation to approve/rescind the sanction and avoid deregistering the case, thus allowing for an earlier resolution.

Delaying deregistration will allow for bringing the participant back into GAIN sooner, preventing sanctions.

Anticipated Effects and Outcomes:

By delaying deregistration, DPSS anticipates that fewer individuals will actually go into sanction, giving them more time to resolve their noncompliances. Participants will benefit by resolving pending issues more promptly without interruption of services.

With this strategy, DPSS expects, cumulatively, to prevent sanctions for about 600 (1% of the mandatory WTW caseload) individuals. The success of this strategy will be measured by tracking the number of cases going into sanction and increased WPR.

E. Reengaging noncompliant or sanctioned individuals

Los Angeles County has shown a successful outcome with the implementation of the GAIN Sanction Home Visit Outreach (GSHVO) in October of 2005. Two new strategies which will also aid in reengaging the noncompliant participants are:

NEW POLICIES/IMMEDIATE

1. Ensure sanctioned participants are interviewed by a GSW when they come to the CalWORKs district office for their annual redetermination appointment in order to reengage them in the welfare-to-work process.

This additional contact with participants will encourage some to cure their sanction and participate in the welfare-to-work program.

NEW POLICIES/LONG RANGE

2. Establish a special handling unit in each region to provide intensive services for three months to formerly sanctioned participants. This will ensure that participants continue with their welfare-to-work plans and help to eliminate any new barriers that may be encountered.

Establishing a special unit will ensure participants who were previously sanctioned will receive intensive services. This will reduce recidivism.

EXPANSION/IMMEDIATE

The expansion of the GAIN Sanction Home Visit Outreach (GSHVO) program will encourage all participants to return to the program. This current policy will continue to be promoted and expanded as follows:

3. Expand the GSHVO program which provides outreach to individuals in noncompliance/sanction. Outreach includes contacts/home calls to reengage individuals in noncompliance/sanction into GAIN. The expansion will add 30 GSWs to the project, enabling the project to outreach to all individuals entering/in sanction over the next year.

Expanding GSHVO will enable the GAIN Regions to have a total of 85 staff dedicated to outreach to all individuals entering noncompliance/sanction. By increasing outreach, sanctions will decrease and participation rates will increase.

Anticipated Effects and Outcomes:

With these new and expanded intensive services to noncompliant/sanctioned persons, DPSS anticipates a reduction in the number of sanctioned cases. The intensive services resulting from these policies will reduce recidivism, increase cured sanctions, and decrease overall sanctions.

With decreased sanctions/increased reengagement, DPSS expects, cumulatively, an additional 5,400 families (9% of the mandatory WTW caseload) to participate in GAIN. The success of these strategies will be measured by tracking the number of sanctioned cases and increased WPR.

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

Los Angeles County is anticipating that other actions will result in program improvement once the following policies/strategies are implemented:

NEW POLICIES/IMMEDIATE

1. Reduce the GSW yardstick from 115 to 90 cases and modify the work of the case-carrying GSWs to allow more focus on direct interaction with participants. By doing so, participants will be more likely to engage and stay engaged in activities. GSWs will also receive additional training on how to resolve deeper issues that may be holding a participant back from being successful.

Currently, due to time constraints, GSWs are only able to address surface problems that are presented by GAIN participants. With fewer cases, GSWs will be able to have higher levels of personal interaction, giving him/her the ability to discover and resolve deeper issues that may hold a participant back from being successful, such as fear of failure, anxiety, or a specialized supportive services issue.

2. Establish an audit team to conduct monthly audits to monitor Welfare-to-Work participation in all GAIN Regions including the contracted regions. The audit team will focus on identifying welfare-to-work errors and probable causes identifying corrective actions in order to provide information to administrators who can then take corrective action.

This process proved successful in reducing the County's Food Stamp error rate. Therefore, this approach is being established to increase work participation as well.

3. Adopt a study time policy that allows for counting of study time for education-related activities. Collaborate with educational institutions to incorporate study time which can be documented and counted for participants in educational programs, including self-initiated programs. Study time is counted towards participation hours in a SIP activity as a core welfare-to-work activity if the participant receives educational credit and/or units that count toward the completion of his/her degree or certificate program. Documented non-credit study hours can be counted as non-core hours of participation in welfare-to-work activities.
4. Implement a departmental data tracking system to identify and resolve systemic barriers to welfare-to-work participation. This report will be produced at a departmental, regional, and worker level.

Having specific data will enable the County to focus its efforts on those areas identified as requiring specific attention.

NEW POLICIES/LONG RANGE

5. Hire a consultant to review the GAIN Program process, after obtaining community input on the scope of the review. Include input from CalWORKs families to determine if the program is serving them effectively.

A consultant with an objective outlook and participants' experiences will be able to identify processes and program designs which can be changed to enhance the GAIN Program and increase participation.

6. Conduct case manager training which will focus on increasing participation while ensuring that each participant is assigned to activities appropriate to his/her individual circumstances, on motivational interviewing, and on the CalWORKs/GAIN program philosophy which emphasizes employment, education/training, specialized supportive services, and other welfare-to-work activities. The training will also address good cause and exemptions, as well as ways to prevent the imposition of sanctions. The training will use case studies from the CAO's reports on sanctioned participants as a pedagogical tool to conduct training for GSWs. Training is necessary so staff have the needed skills to:

- a) Encourage participation; and
- b) Discover/resolve deeper issues that may not initially be visible.

Having an explicit program philosophy will facilitate all CalWORKs/GAIN staff and contractors to focus the efforts on achieving the path to self-sufficiency.

EXPANSION/LONG RANGE

7. Expand SSI advocacy efforts with the disabled by strengthening the connections between CalWORKs SSI advocates and GSWs, while basing the final decision on the preference of the parent. Explain the benefits of both programs so that parents are able to make an informed decision on whether or not they want to leave CalWORKs and

transfer on to SSI. Strengthen the process for GSWs to refer exempt disabled participants to SSI advocates to assist them to apply for SSI ensuring prompt renewal of the participant's exemption to prevent the participant from coming into GAIN as a mandatory participant and potentially negatively affecting his/her SSI eligibility.

The referral and approval of disabled individuals onto SSI will increase his/her income, while eliminating them from the CalWORKs work participation rate denominator.

8. Identify current key CalWORKs and GAIN documents. Contract with a readability expert to review the forms as well as future forms for clarity and appropriate grade level to ensure participants' understanding of GAIN/CalWORKs forms.

In a focus group of sanctioned participants, some individuals indicated that they were unclear about why they were sanctioned and how to cure a sanction. Providing clearer information will reduce this problem.

9. Give first consideration to hiring qualified current and former CalWORKs participants for DPSS job opportunities which are open to the public. Currently, the DPSS Clerical Certification Training Program is designed to assist participants in qualifying for the GAIN/GROW Clerk Registry, Typist-Clerk, Intermediate Typist Clerk (ITC), and Intermediate Clerk/light typing (IC) Certification Lists. This new strategy will expand the Training Program by giving hiring consideration to CalWORKs participants for all open (nonpromotional) DPSS job opportunities.

Giving hiring consideration to CalWORKs participants will expand employment opportunities for CalWORKs participants.

Anticipated Effects and Outcomes:

Through the implementation of these nine general strategies, DPSS anticipates greater overall participation over time. The GSW caseload reduction will have a significant impact as it will enable GSWs to spend much more time in addressing barriers families face in becoming self-sufficient. With this change, their work can be modified to allow them to focus on more direct interaction with participants. Similarly, the audit team is expected to significantly increase the WPR because the case auditing will result in error profiles/corrective action plans being established. Overall, these strategies are expected to increase customer service satisfaction, increase participation, and result in better informed and confident participants progressing toward self-reliance.

With these strategies, DPSS expects, cumulatively, an additional 1,080 (1.8% of the mandatory WTW caseload) to be fully engaged in WTW activities. The success of these strategies will be measured by tracking all of the data elements listed in Section H.

- G. Improving the Collaboration with Local Agencies, including, but Not Limited to, Local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), Community Colleges, Universities, Adult Education and Regional Occupational Programs that Provide Activities that Meet Federal Work Participation Requirements and Provide Participants with Skills that Will Help Them Achieve Long-Term Self-Sufficiency.**

NEW POLICY/IMMEDIATE

1. Work with community colleges to hire participants in County departments to fill work study program slots and coordinate with the colleges to identify agencies, such as the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), and Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) to provide public sector employment opportunities. Community colleges will provide a brief description of the work study job requirements and a list of the employers' responsibilities, also working with students and employers. The work study programs will include case

management services by the colleges, a job learning component to teach basic job skills to participants, also providing a job ladder, and may also include, at the employer's discretion, peer mentoring to assist and motivate other CalWORKs participants. Work study positions provide skills to participants, enabling them to prepare for future unsubsidized employment.

2. Work with adult schools, ROC/Ps, community colleges, universities, and the County's WEX provider (South Bay Workforce Investment Board) to develop short-term, bridge-the-gap programs to reduce time lags between activities.

These programs will assist participants, who are only partially participating due to part-time employment, school schedules and lack of job skills, to be fully engaged.

3. Work with adult schools, ROC/Ps, community colleges, universities and WIBs to identify additional training leading to employment for individuals who wish to have a faster track to employment.

Training leading to employment and actual subsidized employment are gateways to self-sufficiency.

EXPANSION/IMMEDIATE

4. Enhance GAIN Regional Education and Training (GRET) meetings by including other partners that also assist with the education and training of participants, such as CBOs, WIBs, and universities. The purpose of the GRET meetings is to provide the education/training partners an opportunity to share information on current and new programs offered at their facilities, learn about revisions in welfare-to-work program requirements, provide a question/answer forum for case management staff, and address any issues or concerns.

Quarterly GRET meetings will be conducted by all regions (including contractors) as they provide a venue to share information with all regional staff. This will ensure that participants receive the full benefit of programs and services offered by local agencies. Advance notification to community advocates and local partners will be issued so that they can attend.

Currently, each Regional Office hosts a GRET meeting quarterly. The attendees invited are community colleges, adult schools, ROPs, Workforce Centers, LACOE, and the Regional GSSs. A report from each quarterly GRET meeting will be provided to the CalWORKs Education Training and Employment Partnership (CWETEP). The CWETEP is a committee made up of representatives from DPSS, community colleges, adult schools, ROPs, Workforce Centers, the Los Angeles County Office of Education, and advocates to promote and enhance collaboration between all the agencies that provide participants with the skills needed to obtain employment.

Reports from GRET meetings will be shared at CWETEP and CWETEP updates will be shared at each GRET meeting. Using GRET and CWETEP forums, DPSS will strengthen relationships with WIBs, One Stops, educational institutions and training agencies, and coordinate with these agencies to utilize available federal/State funds. The meetings serve to open the channels of communication and enhance working relations with each other.

EXPANSION/LONG RANGE

5. Work collaboratively with community colleges to engage participants in enhanced LEP-focused training programs that will focus on contextualized basic skills programs to help LEPs succeed in vocational, technical and academic programs. Specific industry sectors will be targeted and program content and curriculum will articulate to these high

demand and high-growth industries. Colleges and DPSS will work together to ensure that participants are referred to programs that are appropriate for their career goals.

DPSS contracts with the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) to institutionalize approaches to Limited English Proficient (LEP) training throughout the County's community colleges and adult schools. These approaches focus on the ongoing development of innovative LEP training programs that serve to assist CalWORKs participants in obtaining and retaining employment. DPSS will ensure participants are referred to programs that provide sufficient English language skills to obtain, maintain, and advance in employment once the training is completed.

6. Explore expanding subsidized employment opportunities for participants, as follows:

- expand subsidized employment positions for participants, targeting individuals with barriers, including but not limited to those who were formerly homeless, those who are Limited English Proficient (LEPs), those with a poor work history, those who are receiving mental health/substance abuse services, etc. Expanding the program will make multiple pathways toward self-sufficiency available to participants who may be interested. These positions can include peer mentoring to assist CalWORKs participants.
- work with WIBs to create short-term subsidized employment opportunities. To make this viable, additional State funding will be sought to pay some or all of the County's share of the wage (outside Single Allocation).

Currently, for subsidized employment, the County bears all of the costs of the wage subsidy out of its CalWORKs Single Allocation. This funding mechanism makes subsidized employment very expensive for counties; however, as subsidized employment is an excellent way to increase the work participation rate, a legislative proposal is being explored to provide additional funding, outside the CalWORKs Single Allocation, to fund the wage subsidy by redirecting the CalWORKs grant savings that result from subsidized employment.

- develop expertise on subsidized employment within DPSS. Create a subsidized employment work group in DPSS to improve connections between WIBs, adult schools, and other training providers to increase the number of individuals funneled through such agencies and into paid work experience, OJT, and similar programs. DPSS will hire or train current staff so they can develop an expertise in such programs. By funding new programs and encouraging new providers, DPSS will strengthen such relationships.

Providing subsidized employment opportunities offers participants the experience needed to move into unsubsidized employment.

7. Work with public and nonprofit agencies to expand community service programs to ensure each participant is assigned to activities appropriate to his/her individual circumstances.

Expanding community service programs/positions provides participants experience to include on job resumes and the opportunity to learn job skills leading to employment and self-sufficiency.

8. Strengthen the role of job developers to coordinate with educational institutions in identifying job openings or opportunities for participants.

Anticipated Effects and Outcomes:

Through implementation of these eight strategies, DPSS expects many more participants to engage in education and training activities, as well as employment, obtaining the skills needed to obtain unsubsidized employment leading to self-sufficiency and increased income.

With increased collaboration, additional education/training programs, and increased employment opportunities, DPSS expects, cumulatively, an additional 840 families (about 1.4% of the mandatory WTW caseload) to be fully engaged in WtW activities. The success of these eight strategies will be measured by tracking increased employment (subsidized and unsubsidized), increased participation in education/training, and increased WPR.

3) Plan to measure quarterly progress

H. Plan to measure quarterly progress

Los Angeles County proposes to track its progress with the following data:

- orientation show rate
- job club completion rate
- number of transportation issuances
- employment rate (subsidized and unsubsidized)
- education/training rate
- percentage of WtW plans signed in 90 days (of those required to have a WtW plan within 90 days)
- number of cases between components for 30+ days
- number of cases going into noncompliance/sanction
- number of sanctioned cases
- average hourly wage at placement
- employment retention rate
- work participation rate

Given the current structure of the CalWORKs program, Los Angeles County will focus its efforts on the mandatory and sanctioned participants who now have a duty to participate in the program. Implementing each of the 29 strategies outlined in this plan with individuals currently required to participate, Los Angeles County's goal is to increase its WPR for those individuals currently required to participate to 40% by 9/07, achieving 50% by 9/08 and 9/09, with the cumulative addition of about 12,000 cases in which the adult(s) are engaged in WtW activities 32/35 hours per week.

We recognize that there are two additional groups included in the federally mandated population, including safety net/time-limited and State-exempted individuals. However, as these groups have no current duty to participate, Los Angeles County will be working with the State and other stakeholders to develop other funding mechanisms and program designs which will increase the caseload reduction credit, reduce the denominator and/or increase the numerator to offset the impact of the inclusion of these populations in the federal WPR calculation.

4) Funding

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	\$189.2 M	\$192.2 M	Additional funding will be used to cover increases in salary and employee benefits.
WTW Employment Services	\$179.2 M	\$219.4 M	Additional funding will be used to cover increases in staffing, salary, and employee benefits. Of the \$90 million for counties to improve their WPR, Los Angeles County's allocation was \$27 million. Of this, funds have been set aside for: combining Orientation and Job Club, reducing the GSW yardstick, staff intervention for sanctioned participants at redetermination, additional staff for a Board-mandated process to review and approve contractor issued benefits, a WPR audit team, the expansion of the GAIN Sanction Home Visit program, and work study wage subsidies. Of the \$27 million, any unspent funds will be rolled over to FY 07-08, in accordance with the provisions of the FY 06-07 State Budget Act.
CalWORKs Child Care	\$138.5 M	\$157.1 M	Additional funding will be used for increased costs of additional work activities required under the current contracts.
Cal-Learn	\$7.3 M	\$7.5 M	Additional funding will be used mainly for COLA adjustments.
CalWORKs Funded Mental Health Services	\$22.4 M	\$23.3 M	Additional funding will be used to enhance mental health services for CalWORKs participants.
CalWORKs Funded Substance Abuse Services	\$18.3 M	\$18.5 M	Additional funding will be used to enhance substance abuse services for CalWORKs participants.