

# CalWORKs Reunification Cases

(Revised 04/24/20)

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## Welfare reform

There is no longer AFDC - Aid to Families with Dependent Children, however the Foster Care program under AFDC (AFDC-FC) is still in effect.

Welfare Reform created a new program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

Every state has its own plan for TANF. On January 1, 1998, California's TANF plan, California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), was implemented. The CalWORKs Program is designed to transition people from welfare to work. It provides temporary cash assistance to eligible families with minor children to move families with children in dependency to self-sufficiency through employment.

The San Diego County Board of Supervisors adopted a strategic plan for Welfare Reform which emphasizes parental responsibility to support the family by working. Restructuring the way in which health and social services are delivered to families was designed to complement and support welfare reform efforts.

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## Acronyms

The following terms are used in this section:

**CalWORKs:** California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids. Temporary assistance program for needy families with minor children. Replaced the former AFDC program in California.

**CWS SW:** Child Welfare Services Social Worker.

**ECM:** Employment Case Manager (also classified as Social Workers)

**FC:** Foster Care

**HSS:** Human Services Specialist (formerly known as ET: Eligibility Technician). Also referred as Eligibility Worker.

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**WTW:** Welfare-to-Work. Also referred to as Employment Services.

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**CalWORKs  
reunification cases**

CalWORKs Reunification cases are defined as cases where a child has been removed from the home and is receiving out-of-home care. The Welfare-to-Work services for the parents may remain active for up to 180 days from the date of the child's removal.

The following conditions must be met:

- CalWORKs case was active when the child was removed from the parent and is placed in out-of-home care.
- A result of the child(ren)'s removal the new budget for the remaining parent and child(ren) in the home is \$0.
- The parents are ordered to participate in Family Reunification Services; and
- CWS SW has determined that the provisions of **CalWORKs services is necessary** for Family Reunification.

These cases will be coded with the aid type of 4P (1 parent) or 4R (2 parent). The parents will then receive one month of Medi-Cal while they are being evaluated for eligibility to continuing Medi-Cal programs. The family will receive Transitional CalFresh because CalWORKs is discontinued.

**NOTE:** If there are other children in the home that are not removed and the parent can receive aid for the other children, this does not become a family reunification case.

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**Sanctions**

A family's aid payments will be reduced if a parent does not cooperate with his or her employment plan. Therefore, it is important for all CWS SWs to:

- Understand CalWORKs requirements,
- Encourage parents to cooperate with employment plan, **and**
- Discuss any CWS case plan and Employment Services case plan related conflicts with the ECM.

**NOTE:** There are no sanctions for persons identified in a CalWORKs Reunification case.

It is vitally important that the CWS SW and the ECM work together to encourage the family to overcome barriers in a timely manner, so that reunification can be accomplished.

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**General provisions  
of CalWORKs  
Reunification Cases**

CalWORKs has provisions designed to “ensure accountability and responsible behavior” among parents who have an active CalWORKs case. The following table summarizes some of those provisions:

Provision	Summary of Requirements
Immunizations	Parents must provide proof that their children under the age of 6, in the Assistance Unit (AU), have received age-appropriate immunizations. Failure to do so results in a grant reduction.
School Attendance	All children must attend school in an AU age 16 and above, and for whom school attendance is mandatory, must regularly attend school. A child is presumed to be attending school unless he or she has been deemed a chronic truant pursuant to Section 48263.6 of the Education Code. If a child is deemed a chronic truant, the AU will not have their grant immediately reduced. Instead the child must be referred to Employment Services (ES) to develop an ES Plan. If after an ES plan is signed, the child does not cooperate with the plan, remains truant, has no good cause, and does not meet an exception, a school attendance penalty must be applied to the AU’s grant; the needs of the child will not be considered in computing the grant of the family.
Child Support	<p>Parents must cooperate with the District Attorney to establish paternity, help locate non-custodial parents and enforce child support orders. Failure to cooperate results in a 25% grant reduction. Failure to assign support rights without Good Cause* may result in denial of aid to the entire family.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Good Cause</a> is ordered for parents who are actively involved with family maintenance or reunification services.</li> </ul>
Denial of Aid for Certain Felony Convictions	<p>Aid may be denied to a parent who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has committed certain types of welfare fraud</li> <li>• Flees to avoid prosecution of a felony</li> <li>• Violates terms of probation or parole</li> </ul>
Work Participation	Unless exempt from work requirements, all parents must participate in WTW activities. The required hours varies depending on if the household consists of one or two parents. The CWS case plan can be the same as the WTW plan. Example: 16 hrs part time work, 4 hrs Mental Health/Drug Counseling, 15 hrs in a vocational training program.

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**General provisions  
of CalWORKs (cont.)**

Provision	Summary of Requirements
Time Limits	<p>Aided adults are eligible to the Federal cumulative time limit of 48 CalWORKs months unless the parent(s) are eligible to a clock stopper such as an exemption or extension.</p> <p>A WTW mandatory participant who has exhausted their WTW 24-MTC must comply with participation and core hour requirements (CalWORKs Federal Standards). WTW participants who fail without good cause to meet CalWORKs Federal Standards will be removed from the assistance unit (AU) after exhausting.</p>

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**Safety net for  
children**

Federal law imposes a cumulative time limit of 60 months of aid for most families. The 48-month time limit applies to aid received under CalWORKs or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. The period of time parents receive WTW services through a CalWORKs Reunification case does not count against the 48-month time limit.

California is one of very few states that currently provides a “safety net” for children whose parents have exhausted the CalWORKs time limits. Parents will lose their benefits after 48 cumulative months, but cash aid will continue in the amount equal to the children’s portion of the grant.

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**Child care**

The client receives all information and orientation about CalWORKs child care at the time of application. CalWORKs HSS sends the clients child care packets when exemptions expire for WTW and when transitioning off aid. CalWORKs funded child care is only available for WTW clients. For other resources, see Subsidized Child Care.

The Child Care Case Manager and Payment Technician conduct orientations and process child care payments.

Stage 1: Child care begins upon the entry of a person into the CalWORKs assistance program. Childcare is based on the need of the parent depending on the parents WTW plan. The childcare provider must be approved by the County.

Stage 2: Child care may begin when child care is available through a local stage two program and the County determines stability; or when a recipient is transitioning off of aid.

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**WTW services**

The ECM has the following responsibilities:

- Develop a “Welfare-to-Work” (WTW) activity plan with the client.
- Identify barriers to employment and provide service referrals (e.g., parenting classes, mental health services, substance abuse treatment, domestic violence treatment, etc.).
- Monitor compliance with the WTW plan.
- Initiate the noncompliance process, for participants who are not in compliance with WTW requirements, by collaborating with the HSS to impose the WTW sanction.
- Monitor and coordinate the participant’s child care plan and child care payment arrangements. Complete child care forms and contact card for Child Care Case Manager for Stage 1 Child Care.

**NOTE:** Parents who have received a WTW sanction are eligible to WTW services when they meet the eligibility requirements of a CalWORKs Reunification case.

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**Policy**

CWS SW and the ECM will consult to ensure that:

- the **Child Welfare Services case plan** and the **WTW activity plan** do not conflict (when possible, the ECM may be able to incorporate the case plan into the WTW activity plan),
- the client receives necessary services,
- services are not duplicated.

If a conflict arises, the terms of the CWS case plan will supersede the terms of the WTW activity plan.

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**CWS responsibilities**

The CWS SW will contact the ECM if a parent has an active CalWORKs case at the time the CWS SW develops or modifies a case plan.

The ECM will initiate the contact if a parent applies for aid when CWS has an active case plan.

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**CWS responsibilities (cont.)**

The CalWORKs HSS will contact the CWS SW when children have been removed and the family meets the definition of a CalWORKs Reunification case.

CWS Program	Action
Initial Services (IS/IRS) and CARE	IS/IRS and CARE SW will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear child’s name to see if parent has a CalWORKs or ECM.</li> <li>• Remind parents to communicate with their ECM if current family problems prevent them from complying with their WTW plans.</li> <li>• Consult with the ECM, as necessary, when recommending services to help a parent resolve family problems so that there is a team effort to resolve barriers to reunification and to keep plans consistent with one another.</li> <li>• Record all contacts with the ECM into CWS/CMS (Service Management Section, Contact Notebook)</li> </ul>
Initial Services (IS/IRS) Court Intervention (CI) Voluntary <b>and</b> Court cases	When developing a case plan, SW will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the parent if he/she has been receiving aid.</li> <li>• If yes, ask for the name of the current ECM.</li> <li>• Within 3 days, notify the ECM about the CWS case plan.</li> <li>• Discuss the case plan with the ECM if the CalWORKs case will remain active. (The ECM will modify the WTW plan, if necessary.)</li> <li>• Call the ECM when changes occur in the service plan or if the child returns home.</li> <li>• Record all contacts with the ECM into CWS/CMS (Service Management Section, Contact Notebook)</li> </ul>
Continuing Services (CS)	When a parent is receiving aid for one or more children, the Continuing SW will contact the ECM: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within one week of receiving a new case.</li> <li>• When the case plan changes.</li> <li>• When the service case closes.</li> <li>• When a child returns home.</li> <li>• Record all contacts with the ECM into CWS/CMS (Service Management Section, Contact Notebook).</li> </ul>
Family Preservation Program (FPP)	The FPP SW will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the parents if they have a WTW plan.</li> <li>• Discuss any service plan related conflicts with the ECM and assigned SW.</li> </ul>

**Procedures for CalWORKs reunification cases**

The following table gives a brief description of who is responsible for what procedures when processing a CalWORKs Reunification case:

Who	Responsibilities
Foster Care Staff at time of detention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notify the CalWORKs HSS that children have entered CWS.</li> <li>• Provide the name of the SW and their phone number.</li> <li>• Send CalWORKS case information form to appropriate FRC.</li> </ul>
CalWORKs HSS	Contact CWS SW and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verify who has been removed.</li> <li>• Ask if WTW services are necessary for reunification.</li> <li>• Give the SW the ECM’s name and phone number.</li> <li>• Convert case to CalWORKs Reunification case which will include CalFresh, if eligible.</li> <li>• Evaluate for eligibility to continued Medi-Cal Programs.</li> <li>• Send notice to the parent if Medi-Cal is discontinued.</li> </ul>
Child Welfare Services SW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call the ECM and coordinate a plan for reunification which includes services.</li> <li>• Provide a copy of the Court ordered case plan when requested by the CalWORKs ECM.</li> </ul>
ECM	When SW recommends reunification services, continue to provide services and coordinate with CWS SW to provide necessary services for reunification.
CalWORKs HSS	Determine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 180 day period for which case will remain active and services provided.</li> <li>• The expiration date.</li> <li>• Case closure of Reunification case which stops the WTW services (or conversion to another aid type if appropriate and services would continue).</li> </ul>

**Teen parents**

In order to receive CalWORKs benefits, unmarried minor teen parents must:

- reside in the home of a parent, legal guardian, other adult relative, or
- adult-supervised supportive living arrangement (e.g., group home or maternity home) and
- attending school.

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**School attendance**

Children 16 years of age or older receiving CalWORKs benefits, and for whom school attendance is mandatory, must regularly attend school.

If a child age 16 years of age or older has not been attending school and is deemed a chronic truant, pursuant to Section 48263.6 of the Education Code, the AU will not have their grant immediately reduced. Instead the child must be referred to Employment Services (ES) to develop an ES Plan.

If after an ES plan is signed, the child does not cooperate with the plan, remains truant, has no good cause, and does not meet an exception, at that time the school attendance penalty must be applied to the AU's grant; the needs of the child will not be considered in computing the grant of the family.

CWS SWs should reinforce with parents the need for children to attend school regularly, stressing the financial as well as educational repercussions for children with poor attendance.

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**Alignment with SET**

This policy aligns with SET [Value 4](#): Shared Responsibility with Community Partners which is characterized by cultural responsiveness/community resources/shared vision for safety permanency-wellbeing/incorporating family voice in identifying formal-informal resources.

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