

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

Los Angeles County

Visit Date: October 16 -17, 2013

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

Los Angeles 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] X4 4 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 two-day field visit was performed in Los Angeles (LA) County October 16-17, 2013 in City of Industry, CA. The field visit team included one policy manager and the Branch Chief from the CDSS, Welfare-to-Work Division, CalWORKs Employment and Eligibility Branch along with numerous staff from LA County's CalWORKs/GAIN (Greater Avenues for Independence) office. The field visit consisted of a kick-off meeting, close-out meeting, staff interviews, and case management observations with county staff over a two day period.

Implementation Strategies

In November 2012, LA County began a series of trainings to staff that began with a general overview of the SB 1041 changes. The county also released an extensive list of newsletter articles, administrative directives (AD) and other written documents regarding the implementation of SB 1041. The LA County office also worked closely with their advocate community prior to finalizing training materials for staff.

Successes

Despite the short timeframe for SB 1041 implementation, LA County has managed to successfully deliver a significant amount of training and materials to their staff and partners to assist clients in their understanding of the new rules. This included training to their local community colleges, welfare advocates, and WTW employment services contractors. This became evident throughout the visit as GAIN services workers from different offices were interviewed on their understanding of the changes. Additionally, their active participation on the SB 1041 Implementation Workgroup proved to be valuable in that it helped the County develop more thorough procedural guides for staff.

Key Recommendations

Data is an important measure of progress, it is imperative that once LA County's system has been updated for the recent changes to the CalWORKs program, that additional training be provided to workers and that data is monitored for accuracy. Also, the County should consider cross training employment and eligibility staff to ensure a more effective delivery of services to clients.

Acknowledgments

The CDSS thanks LA County Social Services Agency 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

Los Angeles At-a-glance

Total Caseload.....	174,357
<small>(Source: CalWORKs Cash Grant Caseload Movement Report CA 237 CW Line Item 8a-July 2013)</small>	
WTW Enrollees.....	49,340
<small>(Source: CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Monthly Activity Report WTW 25/25A Line Item 1-July 2013)</small>	
Mandatory Participants (enrollees + sanctioned + non-compliance).....	68,893
<small>(Source: CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Monthly Activity Report WTW 25/25A Line Items 1, 3A, and 31-July 2013)</small>	

Reengagement Plan Received.....**Yes**
 Beginning Date of Reengagement.....**August 1, 2013**
 Consortium System.....LEADER

Data/Statistics:

Note: LA County was not able to submit the data statistics requested by the CDSS prior to the visit because they are in process of re-programming their automated system to allow them the ability to collect that key data related to SB 1041 implementation. The County had expected the automation to be in place February 2014 at which time they will submit data to the CDSS for analysis. However, they were able to provide preliminary data for the former short-term young child exempt population.

- 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: **unavailable**
- 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: **unavailable**
- Sanctions that were cured as a result of SB 1041: **unavailable**
- Former short-term young child exempt clients (Assembly Bill [AB] X4 4) that have been reengaged: **see chart below.**

	Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13	Jul-13	Aug-13	Sep-13
Entered Reengagement Process (Received CW 2206)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1392	1017
Completed Reengagement Process	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	89

- WTW plans that have changed as a result of SB 1041 implementation: **unavailable**
- Clients that have used the new once in a lifetime young child exemption: **unavailable**
- Other statistics that the county is keeping related to SB 1041 implementation: **unavailable**

Other Key Data:

CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Monthly Activity Report (WTW 25/25A) Summary
 [January-July 2013]

Month	Enrollees	Exemptions	Sanctions	MH/SA/DV	Transportation	Ancillary	Work Activities
January	50175	31052	13292	9585	18917	5015	15746
February	49810	30300	13609	9535	20023	5927	15419
March	48762	31065	13526	9444	20010	5458	15697
April	49197	30690	13651	9744	20622	4330	15743
May	48101	31491	13710	9659	20149	4090	15573
June	48454	30819	14000	9617	17692	4501	15819
July	49340	30187	14265	9414	17963	4068	15885

All Families - Work Participation Rates
[Federal Fiscal Year 2011]

Los Angeles County	44.90%	California Statewide Rate	28.5%
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[Federal Fiscal Year 2012]

Los Angeles County	46.30%	California Statewide Rate	29.30%
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Summary of Documents provided by Los Angeles County:

- Instructional announcements provided by the county 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 a list of training strategies, materials available on-line, and materials distributed during staff meetings.
- LA 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 tool was provided to the county administrator and caseworkers in advance of the visit. The administrator interview panel consisted of two CDSS staff with numerous county administrative staff. The caseworker interviews were conducted by two CDSS staff members with several caseworkers from different units, including specialized supportive services units, within the county.

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]

The LA County office mailed the CW 2205 to all clients the week of November 26, 2012. They began their comprehensive discussions with this group on January 2, 2013. The county reported that all comprehensive discussions were completed for this group. They used any opportunity (phone or in-person) where contact was made to this group to discuss the SB 1041 changes to clients. Additionally, a second notice was sent out in June 2013 explaining clients' option to potentially reduce their hours as a result of the changes. There was no specific script developed for GAIN services workers, however, staff were instructed to use Administrative Directive (AD) 5119 as a guide to ensure that workers were verbally discussing all of the changes to clients.

Although automation was not currently in place at the time of the visit to definitively capture this information, LA County informally polled GAIN services workers who noted that clients with 24 months or less remaining on CalWORKs were generally choosing the lower hourly requirements when appropriate. And, clients who were attending Vocational Training programs past the 12 month time limit were choosing to continue in those programs.

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

The LA County office started SB 1041 transition for this group in January 2013. Similar to the less than 24 months left population, staff used any opportunity where contact was made to discuss the SB 1041 changes to clients. The GAIN services workers interviewed used the CW 2205 as a guide to explain the options available to clients to plan the best use of their time under the new clock.

[Clients who failed to attend SB 1041 appointments]

Clients meeting new participation requirements who failed to attend their scheduled SB 1041 appointment because of employment were sent a copy of new WTW 2 Plan. For unresponsive clients not meeting new participation requirements who failed to attend their SB 1041 appointments, the GAIN services worker would initiate the noncompliance process.

General Comments

LA County has 24 district offices (Seven GAIN offices specifically for employment-related services) that manage eligibility intake. The GAIN program provides employment-related services to CalWORKs participants to help them find employment, stay employed, and move on to higher paying jobs, which will ultimately lead to self-sufficiency and independence. CalWORKs clients receive GAIN services in the GAIN Regional offices. There are seven regional GAIN offices for WTW employment services, two of which are managed by MAXIMUS for WTW case management services. GAIN services workers carry approximately 115 cases which include mandatory participants and exempt volunteer (sanctioned cases are handled by separate units). LA County did share that additional staff lines were being made to bring the general caseload ratios down.

LA County also has specialized supportive services units that carry a reduced caseload that varies region to region. In addition to specialized supportive services units, Los Angeles County has a GAIN Sanction Home Visit Outreach (GSHVO)) program that outreaches to non-compliant and sanctioned clients where GAIN services workers will make appointments to visit clients at their homes. An ad-hoc report was run through the GEARS system to identify clients with known earnings who were sanctioned. The GSHVO program outreached to those clients who were evaluated for retroactive payments to January 2013 to determine if they met participation requirements based on the new rules.

GAIN services workers from the GSHVO program shared that approximately 70 percent of the clients were not at home at the time of the attempted visit. In fact, they yield the best results from the telephone calls made to clients alerting them of the County's request to visit them in their home. LA County also noted that in the past they had a pre-sanction outreach effort unit within the GSHVO but had discontinued it due to budget reductions. However, at the time of the visit, the County was discussing the possibility of reinstating the unit.

New Young Child Exemption

LA County reported that most families who were eligible for this new one-time exemption are opting to exercise it including two-parent families.

The new WTW Activity Plan/Form (WTW) 2

The new WTW 2 form was made available in GEARS in January 2013. LA County also uses a separate form to document a client's supportive services needs (Form 6151).

General Comments

The GAIN Services Workers interviewed confirmed that they had begun using the WTW 2 immediately upon its release. They noted that clients are utilizing their flexibility to engage in non-traditional activities to make better use of their time on aid long-term. This included discussing any potential legal and financial issues that may be a barrier to a client's success in the program. However, in addition to the lengthiness of the new WTW 2, some workers also noted difficulties in completing the WTW 2 for two-parent families, Self-Initiated Program (SIP) clients, and for families with family reunification plans.

Reengagement Process

LA County's reengagement process officially began on August 1, 2013. All participants that were in the county's reengagement population will be scheduled for a 'Reengagement Evaluation Appraisal Appointment' based on their CalWORKs redetermination month. Clients who are not registered in a WTW activity as volunteers will be scheduled for an appraisal appointment. Clients who are currently in a WTW activity as volunteers will be scheduled for a reengagement appointment (not an appraisal). Each GAIN services worker in the reengagement specialized unit will be responsible for having a meaningful discussion with each client to ensure they understand all changes associated with SB 1041, including the availability of supportive services. In December 2012, Welfare Data Tracking and Implementation Project (WDTIP) data reflected 20,988 clients in this population.

The reengagement process for Los Angeles County includes the following:

- Send a CW 2206 at least 60 days prior to reengagement evaluation appointment; and
- Send a reengagement evaluation appointment letter (TEMP 2237) at least 30 days prior to reengagement evaluation appointment attach a CW 2186A, CW 61, and a copy of CW 2206.
- A phone call at least three days in advance of the Reengagement appointment.

LA County began scheduling the first reengagement appointments with specialized units in October 2013. During their SB 1041 appointment, clients are provided with a general description of supportive services available, program requirements and flexibility under SB 1041. The GAIN services workers determine clients' status and needs and if another WTW exemption applies. Additionally, clients are informed of their remaining number of CalWORKs 48 months, assigned appropriate WTW activity(ies) that include the identification of barriers.

[Volunteers]

AB X4 4 short term exempt clients who were volunteering in the WTW program on December 31, 2012 were allowed to continue volunteering until they are reengaged. In addition, AB X4 4 short term clients were allowed to volunteer after January 1, 2013 without becoming reengaged and months do not count towards their CalWORKs 48-month time limit until they are sequentially reengaged based on their CalWORKs Redetermination.

General Comments

Given the short timeframe to implement all of the changes associated with SB 1041, Los Angeles County administrative staff did acknowledge some systematic and procedural issues initially; however, the County noted that most of those issues have been resolved. They also acknowledged that there will likely be some reconciliation of clients' 24-Month Time Clock once automation is in place.

Clients with good cause for lack of funding for supportive services

LA County sent clients in this population a notice using language issued by the CDSS in ACL 13-02 advising them of the end of this exemption and a scheduled appointment for an appraisal. Although the exemption officially ended on December 31, 2013, the County did not restart clients' CalWORKs 48-month time clock for those months prior to the noticing sent in April 2013.

Implementation Strategies

Beginning November 2012, Los Angeles County provided six different trainings to staff which were developed internally:

- **November 2012**
SB 1041 "Train-the-Trainer" session that focused on providing a general overview of the SB 1041 changes as well as notifying staff of the first general informing notice
- **December 2012**
All staff training of the SB 1041 changes;
- **February 2013**
Additional staff training of the SB 1041 changes with a separate training for sanction workers was provided;
- **July 2013**
An additional "Train-the-Trainer" to address specific issues related to manual tracking while automation is pending; and
- **August 2013**
Reengagement training for workers in the specialized units handling this population.

LA County also released an extensive list of newsletter articles, administrative directives (AD) and other written Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) documents regarding the implementation of SB 1041:

- **AD 5094**-Change of Educational/Training Program (January 24, 2013);
- **DPSS Forms Manual [GN 6387]**-Change of Educational/Training Program (January 29, 2013);
- **DPSS Forms Manual [GN 6386]**-Welfare-to-Work Assignment Plan Acknowledgement Form (January 31, 2013);
- **AD 5108**-Changes in Job Club due to Senate Bill 1041 (February 26, 2013);
- **AD 5109**-CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work 24-Month Time Clock General Informing Mailing (March 12, 2013);
- **DPSS Forms Manual [WTW 2]**-Welfare-to-Work Plan Activity Assignment (March 21, 2013);
- **DPSS Forms Manual [TEMP IN 22]**-Good Cause for Lack of Supportive Services Informing Notice (April 4, 2013);

- **AD 5113**-CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work 24-Month Time Clock and Hourly Participation Requirements/Questions and Answers (April 9, 2013);
- **AD 5119**-CalWORKs Senate Bill 1041 New Welfare-to-Work Changes Effective January 1, 2013 (May 14, 2013);
- **DPSS Forms Manual [CW 2206]**-Young Child Exemption Ending Informing Notice (May 23, 2013); and
- **Administrative Memorandum 13-09**-Federal Work Participation Rate and Welfare-to-Work 24-Month Time Clock.

General Comments

LA County developed their own training material prior to the release of the CDSS' Training Aid. LA County also works closely with their advocate community prior to finalizing training materials for staff. During the trainings, staff was instructed to determine the time left on aid for each client and decide, along with the client, the best course of action that will maximize the benefits for the client. GAIN services workers were also instructed to fully explain the changes related to SB 1041 at every contact in order for the client to be able to make an informed decision. At the time of the visit, Los Angeles County estimated that staff has completed all comprehensive discussions for their clients.

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

LA County uses GEARS (GAIN Employment Activity and Reporting System) for WTW employment services case management and LEADER (Los Angeles Eligibility, Automated Determination, Evaluation and Reporting) for initial and ongoing CalWORKs eligibility determinations. Five cases (four single-parents and one two-parent) were reviewed. The cases varied by age of parents and children in the Assistance Unit, ethnicity, education level, and primary language spoken.

During the case reviews, the GAIN services workers had to operate the two systems which included opening and closing programs in each of the systems for each case using only one monitor. The CDSS would recommend a two monitor set-up for the workers to create a more streamlined and efficient case management. Also noted during the case review was the extensive amount of additional documents that LA County has clients review and sign.

The following is a summary of the case findings:

Noticing Requirements:

All notice requirements were met except for the issuance of the CW 2208, none of the case files reviewed had received this notice.

Comprehensive Discussions:

All cases reviewed had received an in-person comprehensive discussion.

Learning Disability Screenings:

All cases reviewed included an offering of a learning disabilities screening. All but one case waived. The client in that case did not score at a level that required any further assessment for a learning disability.

Welfare-to-Work Activity Assignment (WTW 2):

Each case reviewed had a signed copy of the new WTW 2. Two out of the five cases reviewed reflected a reduction of hours for clients with young children. Three out of the five cases were participating in vocational education while the other two were participating in unsubsidized employment.

Supportive Services:

All cases reviewed had been appropriately provided childcare, transportation, and ancillary expenses.

Conclusion

Successes

Despite the short timeframe for SB 1041 implementation, LA County has managed to successfully deliver a significant amount of training and materials to their staff and partners to assist clients in their understanding of the new rules. This included training to their local community colleges, welfare advocates, and WTW employment services contractors. This became evident throughout the visit as GAIN services workers from different offices were interviewed on their understanding of the changes. Additionally, their active participation on the SB 1041 Implementation Workgroup proved to be valuable in that it helped the County develop more thorough procedural guides for staff. LA frequently volunteers to participate in pilots, studies, and new initiatives as well. This includes their participation as an “early adopter” of the Online CalWORKs Appraisal Tool (OCAT) and participation in the CalWORKs multi-year program evaluation.

Prior to the implementation of SB 1041, LA County's existing business practices such as the GAIN Sanction Home Visit Outreach program have been helpful in outreaching to clients whose sanctions would be cured based on the new hourly requirements for single parents with young children. Also significant, their established specialized supportive services units to handle the demands of clients who have needs that require more intensive case management (i.e. homelessness, domestic violence, mental health, substance abuse) has been a successful strategy in helping clients resolve those issues and improve their employability. There are also specialized units that outreach to exempt clients 90 days prior to their exemption ending to help transition them back into the WTW flow. Additionally, specialized units were created to handle the reengagement population. Utilizing existing specialized units will be helpful to them in 2014 when developing their Family Stabilization program.

LA County's well-established working relationship with their local community colleges which includes coordination contracts and monthly meetings has ensured continued success for the large percentage of their CalWORKs clients participating in education plans. Also impressive, LA County's philosophy of transparency with their local welfare advocacy groups during the development of county policies and procedures that assure that all clients' needs are being considered at all times has contributed to a cooperative partnership.

LA County has been a model for their peer counties with their successful Transitional Subsidized Employment (TSE) program that targets CalWORKs clients who are unsuccessful at finding employment. LA County utilizes their network of 40 Workforce Centers to aid in this effort which included employment opportunities for clients in both the public- and private-sectors.

Also notable is LA County's work participation rate (WPR) which has been consistently higher than the State's average for the past several years. Each region has their own strategy for work participation performance. What has worked well for them is the use of a specialized unit to review cases to determine if the client is appropriately participating and receiving supportive services to maintain the required level of participation that can be verified. There is also use of key measures that focus mainly on engagement of clients in the program that they assess on a monthly basis to ensure that no client is left behind.

Challenges

LA County has 9.8 (U.S. Census 2010) million residents, larger in population than 42 states; an area of 4,083 square miles, encompassing 88 cities; and the needs of an ethnically and culturally diverse community. They maintain approximately 40 percent of the State's entire CalWORKs caseload and for State Fiscal Year 13/14 their single allocation exceeded \$500 million. To implement such sweeping changes to the CalWORKs program has presented significant challenges to LA County. With seven GAIN offices, ensuring that information is provided timely and correctly has likely been difficult. In addition to SB 1041, LA County, like other counties, has also had to implement other significant changes to their delivery of social services programs such as implementation of Semi-Annual Reporting and the Affordable Care Act all of which require extensive automation changes.

Collecting accurate data on the progress of SB 1041 has also been equally difficult. At the time of the visit, LA County was working to update their system to track clients' progress so data to support the completion of the comprehensive discussions and other requested data was not available.

Additionally, LA County's community colleges have not been able to offer the full array and volume of classes as in previous years which has affected clients' ability to complete their programs timely to effectively utilize their time on aid.

Key Recommendations

Data is an important measure of progress, it is imperative that once LA County's system has been updated for the recent changes to the CalWORKs program, that additional training be provided to workers and that data is monitored for accuracy. Also, the County should consider cross training employment and eligibility staff to ensure a more effective delivery of services to clients.

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