
(g) CHILD CARE AND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES
[WIC Section 10531]

Please briefly describe how child care services will be provided to CalWORKs participants. This should include a description of how the county will provide child care for families transitioning from county funded providers to non-county funded providers of child care services. It should also indicate what criteria the county will use to determine, on a case-by-base basis, when parents who have primary responsibility for providing care to a child six months of age or younger, may be exempt from welfare-to-work participation. The exemption period must be at least twelve weeks and, at county discretion, can be increased to one year for the first child. The exemption period for subsequent children is twelve weeks, but may be increased to six months. Briefly describe the criteria the county will use to determine the period of time a parent or other relative will be exempt considering the availability of infant child care, local labor market conditions, and any other factors used by the county. Additionally, briefly describe how the county will ensure parents needing child care services can access the Resource and Referral Agency.

Effective January 1, 1998 there will be a three-tiered child care system for CalWORKs participants in Monterey County. This will be a coordinated and collaborative system among the following:

- Monterey County Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (R&R)
- Department of Social and Employment Services (DSES) (Administrator for Stage One)
- Children's Services International (the Alternative Payment Program [APP] and Administrator for Stages Two and Three services)
- Monterey County Child Care Planning Council
- Various service and child care providers throughout the County of Monterey.

The Local Child Care Planning Council will recommend to the Board of Supervisors and Superintendent of the Monterey County Office of Education, the appropriate Council reconfiguration to meet AB 1542 Planning Council requirements. The Council has provided insights into the creation of the Monterey County CalWORKs Plan.

It is the intent of the stakeholders that the child care services plan be implemented in a manner that is respectful and supportive of both parents and children, creating an environment that invites participation, fosters achievement, and is "customer friendly."

It is intended that each lobby will have an inviting and appropriate space for parents and young children to use while waiting or participating in transactions with the Department. Parents may call the 800 number of the Resource and Referral Agency to access child care information. Child and consumer education videos, and other

appropriate brochures and flyers that support healthy families are in the lobbies of the three (3) district offices. Child care information is provided at the CalWORKs and Employment Services orientations.

Seamless Service

Monterey County DSES will work closely with the Resource & Referral Agency, and Children's Services International (Stages Two and Three provider) to provide seamless services which meet participants' needs. Stages One, Two and Three are described below.

Stage One

Stage One will be administered by the Monterey County DSES and begins when a participant enters job search or when child care is needed for a participant to complete his/her welfare-to-work activity. Stage One child care services will be received until the family is "stabilized."

The family will be transferred to Stage Two or Three child care when stable and if funds are available in Stage Two or Three. If a family cannot be served in Stages Two or Three, they will continue to be served in Stage One. Persons participating in Cal-Learn or welfare-to-work activities other than employment will remain in Stage One until discontinued from cash aid or until completion of Cal-Learn or non-employment welfare-to-work activities.

Stage Two

The local APP, Children's Services International, will administer Stage Two. This stage begins when a participant meets the definition of "stable" and when funds are available. When a child enters Stage Two, his/her name will be placed on the Stage Three waiting list and moved to Stage Three as funds become available and the child reaches twenty-four months in Stage Two.

Stage Three

Children's Services International, the local APP, will provide Stage Three child care services. Children's Services International will make the transfer from Stage Two to Stage Three.

Priorities

Families who receive diversion payments will have priority for Stage Two or Stage Three.

A family that meets State and federal eligibility guidelines will receive child care services according to present CalWORKs guidelines and any future revised guidelines. Child care services will be provided to children 10 years and younger, and if funds are available, to children 11-12 years of age.

Definitions

Exemption Based on Care of A Child

The standard exemption from welfare-to-work participation for Care of a Child shall be twelve months, the first time the exemption is claimed, and six months following the birth or adoption of any subsequent children while a family is receiving cash benefits. This exemption will be determined on a case-by-case basis and routinely reviewed by an eligibility supervisor.

The length of the exemption will be based on:

- Whether infant care is available;
- Whether local labor market conditions make it likely that job search will be successful. A county unemployment rate equal to or exceeding 10% creates a presumption that becoming employed will be difficult;
- Whether there are medical or other special needs of the infant or mother as verified by a legal, medical, or social services entity;
- Whether there is a need to provide in-home care for a family member incapable of self-care (in which case the exemption shall be granted for Care of an Ill or Incapacitated Member of the Household, rather than Care of a Child);
- State regulations regarding unemployment and deprivation for all families and the two-parent state-only program; and
- Other reasons that DSES deems to constitute a compelling need.

When two parents are in the CalWORKs Assistance Unit only one of them may receive an exemption for Care of a Child at any given time.

If a parent chooses to return to work or to participate in welfare-to-work activities sooner than the standard exemption periods described above child care payments will be provided within funding availability.

Stable

A family is considered stable under the following conditions:

- The parent is employed for a minimum of six (6) months; and
- Child care is consistent for a minimum of six (6) months.

Careful assessment of the indicators is necessary to assure success for long-term employment. Based on the availability of funding for each Stage, the definition of “stable” will be reviewed to see if it is realistic for families who are Monterey County CalWORKs participants. If necessary, the definition will be revised.

Payment System

Monterey County DSES implemented its child care provider payment system in July 1998.

Payments are sent directly to providers. Maximum payment is based on the Regional Market Rate schedule established by the California Department of Education.

Transportation Services

Monterey County is approximately 100 miles long and 35 miles wide with a population of 364,500 as of January 1, 1998. The two major urban areas are Salinas, the County seat, and the Monterey Peninsula located 20 miles to the west. Salinas Valley cities of Gonzales, Soledad, Greenfield and King City, are located south of Salinas along a fifty-mile corridor. Additionally, there are smaller areas that are a part of the unincorporated area of Monterey County such as Moss Landing, Castroville, Prunedale, Big Sur, San Ardo, San Lucas, Bradley, Fort Hunter Liggett and the mountain areas.

Monterey County faces many of the same transportation issues that similar counties face throughout the State. The Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) system serves the Monterey Peninsula and Salinas areas and connects with North Monterey County and Watsonville in Santa Cruz County. Until 2002 there was no public transit among King City (fifty miles south of Salinas), the other southern Monterey County cities, and Salinas. This was a significant problem for families engaged in welfare-to-work.

In 2002 utilizing federal Jobs Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) grant funds, Local Transportation Fund (LTF) money from cities and the County, and CalWORKs Incentive funds Monterey-Salinas Transit began fixed-route bus service that connects King City, Greenfield, Soledad, Gonzales, Chualar, and Salinas and established a pilot dial-a-ride service in underserved parts of Prunedale, Aromas, and Castroville. These

services assist CalWORKs and other individuals without vehicles to access employment and training activities throughout the county. Public transportation is very limited in other rural areas of the County.

In 1993, Fort Ord closed and the California State University at Monterey Bay came into existence. This created an increased transportation need since Monterey County and the local cities are responsible for the roads within the former Fort Ord. The closure also created a change in residential patterns in surrounding cities and employment industries within the County.

Tourism is one of the three largest industries in the County. Each weekend there are major events drawing people to the area to enjoy and participate in the scenic beauty and events. This creates additional demands on the transportation infrastructure and public transportation systems. In addition, due to the high cost of housing, many people drive to work each day putting further pressure on the roads and public transportation system.

Barriers and New Initiatives

The transportation dilemma creates a challenge for persons desiring to work in other locales. The same can be said of those seeking employment in occupations and industries different from those available in the area where they live.

Issues for CalWORKs customers are:

- Unavailability of transportation from some rural areas to the larger semi-urban areas;
- Minimal public transportation service to the largest employers;
- Lack of a car for many participants;
- Expensive taxi service; and
- Unreliability of transportation from friends and relatives.

The pilot fixed-route transit service established in 2002 between southern Monterey County cities and Salinas with grant funds has achieved stable funding and has become a regular part of the Monterey-Salinas Transit schedule. The pilot DART dial-a ride service in North Monterey County ended due to insufficient ridership, but two parts of the area served were added to fixed routes.

Transportation Planning

CalWORKs customers need to overcome the significant barriers of child care and transportation in order to become fully employed. The DSES approach to

transportation needs includes long-range planning, and collaboration and coordination with local agencies and transportation providers.

It is within this context that DSES collaborates with the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC), the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) and MST to plan innovative solutions for areas that have no or minimal transit service. AMBAG took the lead in developing a Jobs Access Transportation Plan for Monterey County that was adopted by the County in 2000.

AMBAG on behalf of a collaborative, including the Monterey County Department of Social and Employment Services and Monterey-Salinas Transit also wrote an application for federal Jobs Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) funding to expand existing public transit service and encourage the use of commute alternatives by CalWORKs families.

JARC funding for expansion of public transit options in North and South Monterey County was awarded to Monterey County as a result of that effort. Two transit expansion projects received CalWORKs Incentive funds contributed by the Monterey County Department of Social and Employment Services up through June 2003 to match the JARC grant. Additional funding for the projects was provided by Local Transportation Fund (LTF) money from cities and the County, and in-kind contributions from Monterey-Salinas Transit.

TAMC is the countywide transportation-planning agency with representation from a variety of agencies including the Board of Supervisors, the cities of Monterey County, the Association of Monterey Bay Governments (AMBAG), CalTrans, and MST. TAMC is charged with developing short and long range (7-20 years) transportation plans and policies; studying needs; exploring funding opportunities and prioritizing projects; and informing local jurisdictions when traffic congestion rises above acceptable levels.

Every two years TAMC develops and updates the Congestion Management Program (CMS). One of the issues addressed is the promotion of alternative transportation methods to manage travel demand and trip reduction.

JARC and CalWORKs Incentive Funds funded a third transportation project through June 30, 2004 that encouraged CalWORKs customers to utilize transportation alternatives including ridesharing, van pools, bike riding, and public and private transit options. TAMC and the County are encouraging these alternatives as well as home-based occupations for residents in remote areas of the County, in order reduce vehicle trips. Other types of public and private transportation options available to CalWORKs customers include para-transit, (called RIDES in Monterey County), Kids Cab, local taxis, a privately funded shuttle to the Salinas One-Stop Career Center from the nearest bus stop, rides from friends and relatives.

In 2004 DSES is participating in the South Monterey County Transportation Options Study chaired by AMBAG. The Department will continue to meet with transportation companies and countywide agencies to assess and address projected needs. Efforts will also be made to seek additional funding, if necessary, to meet identified service gaps.

Transportation Services Available to CalWORKs Participants

The transportation services available to CalWORKs customers and procedures for requesting assistance are presented and discussed in detail at CalWORKs orientations and workshops. Access to local services is reviewed and bus schedules passed out. The importance of a back-up plan and transportation alternatives are taught in the Job Readiness workshop and discussed with the customer during the Job Search workshop so that transportation does not become a hindrance to the Job Search activity, nor to subsequent work commutes. Participants who are enrolled in Welfare-To-Work activities will be reimbursed for all necessary and reasonable job-related transportation costs. Currently the County reimburses CalWORKs customers seeking employment and engaged in approved Welfare-To-Work activities for mileage or bus tickets / bus passes. A voucher system is in place for emergency needs and can be used if necessary.