CalWORKs Program for Family Reunification Cases

NOTE: Our case management system is moving from Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) to Child Welfare Services-California Automated Response and Engagement System (CWS-CARES). This policy includes language, forms/templates, and resources that will be reviewed and updated as we transition into CWS-CARES.

(Revised 10/30/26)

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Related Policies

Additional information can be found in the following policies:

- Case Plans

Resources

The following resources are referenced in this policy:

- CalWORKS Case Plan Documentation
- Cal WORKS Website

Forms

This policy references the following forms:

- 07-335 CalWORKS FR Parental Referral Form (Eligibility SharePoint)

Introduction

Welfare Reform created a new program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) which replaced. Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), however the Foster Care program under AFDC (AFDC-FC) is still in effect.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) became federal law, and established a cash assistance program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), which limited federal funding to a maximum of 60 months in a lifetime and required states to develop and implement programs that would move individuals from dependency to self-sufficiency through employment. Every state has its own plan for TANF.

Introduction (cont.)

On January 1, 1998, California's TANF plan, California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), was implemented. The CalWORKs Program is designed to help families achieve self-sufficiency through the Welfare-to-Work (WTW) program, also known as the Employment Services (ES) program that has participation requirements and a 'Work-First' emphasis, while at the same time supporting families by offering services that help remove barriers to employment and encourage independence.

Parents who were receiving CalWORKs services at the time of removal, including cash aid, can receive CalWORKs FR services to help facilitate CFWB reunification. CalWORKs FR services include continued cash aid for up to six months after child was removed, and other employment services up to 12 months after the child was removed (employment services may extend past 12 months if the CFWB recommendation continues to be family reunification and there is reason to believe the parent is likely to reunify) ACL 25-09.

Definitions

The following terms are used in this Policy:

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

CFWB SW: Child and Family Well-Being Social Worker.

CFWB Case Plan: Case Plan developed by CFWB SW and family containing services and objectives that help facilitate safety and reunification.

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

FC: Foster Care.

HSS: Human Services Specialist; also referred to as Eligibility Staff.

WTW: Welfare-to-Work. Also referred to as Employment Services (ES).

WTW Activity Plan: Plan developed by the ECM and parent containing supportive services to help facilitate self-sufficiency.

AU: Assistance Unit (the household receiving aid).

Policy

Upon removal, or initiation of a case the CFWB SW will ask the parent if they have been receiving CalWORKs cash aid or services. CFWB will document parents' response in the Case Transfer Summary to ensure the next SW has this information and can add it to the case plan.

Policy (cont.)

Upon notification that the CFWB SW has/intends to recommend FR case or a juvenile court has ordered FR case, the CalWORKs eligibility staff will identify the children as temporary out of the home for 30 days and after those 30 days, they will initiate CalWORKs FR and continue the CalWORKs cash grant for a maximum of six months provided the family remains eligible. The CFWB SW must document the need for CalWORKs FR in the case plan. A court order is not necessary to initiate CalWORKs FR services; notification from the CFWB agency to the Employment Services (ES) ECM that a case plan is being developed that will include CalWORKs FR services and cash aid is sufficient. Family Reunification case plans that do not include a cash aid recommendation must be amended prior to cash aid approval. If all children are removed from the home and the CFWB SWor the Juvenile Court does not order reunification, the parent, legal guardian, or Indian custodian is not eligible for any CalWORKs FR services or cash aid and the CalWORKs case will be closed.

CFWB SW and the ECM will consult to ensure that:

- The **CFWB 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 customer receives necessary services,
- services are not duplicated.

NOTE: CFWB is able to, and should, provide a copy of the CFWB Case Plan to the ECM.

CalWORKs Family Reunification Cases

CalWORKs Family Reunification cases are defined as cases where a child has been removed from the home, are placed in out-of-home care, and parents were receiving CalWORKs cash aid at the time of removal. Employment Services for the parents may remain active for six months from the date of the child's removal. SW's must add the recommendation to the case plan to continue CalWORKs FR services if CFWB is recommending FR services.

The following conditions must be met for CalWORKs FR to continue:

- All CalWORKs-eligible children were removed from the home and temporarily placed in out-of-home care by CFWB.
- At least one parent, legal guardian, Indian custodian, or needy caretaker relative must have received CalWORKs at the time of the child/ren's removal to be eligible for CalWORKs reunification services, childcare, and cash aid.
- The CFWB agency or juvenile court has determined that the provision of cash aid, childcare, and CalWORKs FR services is necessary for reunification and a CFWB reunification case plan reflecting this determination is in effect.

CFWB
These cases will be coded with the aid code 4P (1 parent) or 4R (2 parent). The parents will then receive one month/30 days of Medi-Cal while they are being evaluated for eligibility to continue Medi-Cal programs.

The employment services part of CalWORKs FR services may be extended beyond six months if CFWB grants a good cause extension as outlined in ACL 02-36. A good cause extension may be granted under two conditions: (1) the CFWB reunification case plan extends beyond the initial six months from removal or, (2) additional time is required to complete the court-ordered reunification case plan. The CalWORKs FR cash aid is limited to a maximum of six months from the time it is granted, and it may not be extended.

CFWB Responsibilities

Step	Who	What
1	FC Eligibility	• Clears the children in CalSAWS for active CalWORKs case • Complete Case Information section in CalWORKs FR Parental Referral Form • Email the CalWORKs FR Parental referral form to assigned SW, PSS, and the CalWORKS FR general email.
2	SW/PSS	• Reviews the CalWORKs FR Parental Referral Form and assesses if the agency plans, or intends, to offer the family CFWB FR services • Check the appropriate box in the CFWB recommendation section of the form (TIP: If CFWB is offering or intends to offer FR services to the family, we should be recommending CalWORKs FR services continue in order to help facilitate reunification) • Email completed form within 10 business days of receiving it to the Family Reunification inbox. • Add to case plan and submit to Court (recommendation must be on case plan) • Collaborate with CW Staff and ECM on the CFWB case plan • Inform CW Staff and ECM via email if an extension of FR benefits is necessary after the initial six-month eligibility period expires by completing the 07-335 • Inform CW Staff and ECM via email when children are reunited with their parents within three business days from the reunification date by completing the 07-335

CFWB Responsibilities (cont.)

Step	Who	What
3	CalWORKs Eligibility Staff	• Clear the case for CalWORKs eligibility • Determined if all eligible children were removed from the home • Place the children on temporary absence for 30 days • Processes the 07-355 to determine eligibility for FR cash aid. If eligible, approve FR cash aid for six months • Email SW/PSS after the initial six months of FR services have been completed to receive status of CFWB FR services • Inform ECM liaison of the active FR status and referral for ES services via email, including relevant information, like SW name and contact number
4	SW/PSS	• Respond to Eligibility Staff email within 10 business days providing the requested update on the family's CFWB FR services.

Sanctions

WTW sanctioned parents whose aid stopped due to failure to comply with the program requirements may participate in CalWORKs FR services (if CFWB or a juvenile court has determined that such services are necessary for reunification) but are not eligible for cash aid under CalWORKs FR until they cure their sanction. Eligibility Staff and CFWB Staff are encouraged to work together and use the CFWB case plan to assist the family in curing their sanction.

The CFWB SW and Employment Services (ES) staff must collaborate closely to work with FR families to ensure a positive outcome. Open communication is vitally important in this process.

General Provisions of CalWORKs Family 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/youth in the Assistance Unit, 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. Teens are exempt from ES participation requirements unless they become truant. Once truant, they lose the ES exemption and are referred to sign an ES plan to complete an activity to obtain a High School diploma or equivalent. They can become exempt again from ES if they resolve their truant status.
Child Support	Parents must cooperate with the Local Child Support Agency (LCSA) to establish paternity, help locate non-custodial parents and enforce child support orders. Failure to assign support rights without Good Cause* may result in denial of aid to the entire family. Customers may be granted a good cause exemption from Child Support cooperation when such cooperation may reasonably be anticipated to result in serious physical or emotional harm to the customer or child or when: • The aided child was conceived as a result of incest or rape • Legal proceedings for adoption of the child are pending • A public or private agency is counseling the customer regarding adoption options
Denial of Aid for Certain Felony Convictions	Aid may be denied to a parent who: • Has committed certain types of fraud • Flees to avoid prosecution of a felony • Violates terms of probation or parole

General Provisions of CalWORKs Family Reunification Cases (cont.)

Provision	Summary of Requirements
Work Participation	Unless exempt from work requirements, all parents must participate in WTW activities. The required hours vary depending on if the household consists of one or two parents. The CFWB case plan would be followed by the ECM.
Time on Aid (TOA)	• Aided adults are eligible to the Federal cumulative time limit of 60 CalWORKs months unless the parent(s) are eligible to a clock stopper such as an exemption or extension.

Safety Net for Children

Federal law imposes a cumulative time limit of 60 months of aid for most families. The 60-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 60-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 60 cumulative months, but cash aid will continue in the amount equal to the children's portion of the grant.

CalWORKs Child Care Services

Parents should be referred to their ECM for more information on their CalWORKs child care services. This is a brief introduction to help CFWB staff understand what parents who qualify receive.

Customers are informed of the availability of CalWORKs Child Care services at initial CalWORKs application and every redetermination. The customer may request for Child Care services anytime. CalWORKs families have access to immediate and continuous child care upon cash aid approval. CalWORKs recipients who are expected to be referred to Employment Services receive authorization for 24-months of Stage One Child care.

CalWORKs Human Services Specialist (HSS) will provide the childcare information and the childcare request form at the time the of application, reevaluation, expiring employment services exemptions, when the customer goes off aid, or anytime the customer requests childcare. When the customer requests childcare, a Stage One childcare worker will contact them to help them select a provider and get childcare secured. Both the parent and provider will need to enroll with the Stage One Program. The childcare staff will reimburse the selected and enrolled provider for childcare services. Timed-out adults and former CalWORKs customers who received aid within the past 24 months may receive Post Aid childcare services through Stage One under certain circumstances.

CalWORKs Child Care Services (cont.)

CalWORKs Child Care is a three-stage program.

Stage One provides childcare to CalWORKs families when they first engage in the program and are working to stabilize their family situation.

Stage Two provides childcare when the family is determined to be 'stable' or they are discontinued from cash aid. Families may remain in Stage Two until they have been off aid for two years.

Stage Three is for families who exhaust their two years of Stage Two and they are still eligible.

WTW Services

The ECM has the following responsibilities:

- The WTW plan is developed based on the CFWB plan.
- 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 ES 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.

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

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)
- attend school.

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.
