

Linkages: A Case Study



Mark Laurel – Department of Social Services – CalWORKs – Welfare To Work

Amy Lopez - Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services

Linda Walch – Department of Social Services – Child Welfare Services

County of SB Linkages Background

- Pioneer Linkages County Since 2004
- Re-Established" Program in Late 2007 / Early 2008
- Both VFM and AB429 Cases (All Children Removed)
- 3 Offices
- Santa Maria – 70% of the Linkages Cases In The County Are in Santa Maria
- 62% of Removals Are Substance Abuse Related

Communication Is The Key

- MOU between Child Welfare and CalWORKs / Welfare To Work
- MOU between Resource Support Team (Alcohol Drug and Mental Health) and CalWORKs/ Welfare To Work (Separate)
- Mandatory RST referrals on all Linkages Cases
- Leadership / Management Involvement

Those Involved In The Process - The Team -

- Resource Support Team
- CalWORKs Eligibility Worker / Technician
- Welfare To Work Employment Specialist
- Child Welfare Services Social Worker

"One can move a thousand – two can move ten thousand..."

The SB County Linkages Process

1. Case is Identified by Child Welfare Services as Potential Linkages Case
2. CalWORKs / WTW Coordinator is notified by CWS support staff via email
3. Decision made by CalWORKs / WTW – “To Accept or Not Accept”
4. All Parties Notified of Decision Via Email
5. CalWORKs / WTW Worker Makes Mandatory RST Referral
6. Coordinated Case Planning With All Parties Involved and Client
7. Increased Numbers = Fine Tuning of Services

Our Roles – Quick Review

Child Welfare Services

- Safety – Permanency – Well Being
- Participate In Plan Coordination and Court Reviews
- Family Reunification Services

CALWORKs / WTW

- Determines If Case is Acceptable Linkages
- Completes RST Referral
- Participates in Plan Coordination
- Follow Up On RST Reports

Resource Support Team

- Completes Initial Assessment
- Referral To Services
- Participate In Plan Coordination and Case Reviews
- Monthly Reporting To WTW

SB County Linkages Program Goals – The Advantages of The Collaboration

- Duplication Of Services Is Avoided
- Smoother Referral Process
- Cost Savings To Child Welfare Services
- Increased Communication = Increased “Success” In Case Plans
- Team Collaboration Is Documented Throughout the Process

Who Is the Resource Support Team?

- ADMHS Program
- Funded By Our CalWORKs Mental Health/Substance Abuse Allocation To Provide ADMHS Services to ALL Welfare To Work Clients

RST Services

- Substance Abuse
- Transitional Living
- Mental Health Services
- Domestic Violence Intervention and Support
- Re-Engagement Outreach
- Counseling
- Crisis Intervention
- Learning Disability Screening
- Life Skills Education

The RST Process

Assessment – In House



Coordination of Services W/Plan
(Possibly With FTDC)



Referral To Ancillary /
Other Services



Monthly Reporting To
Welfare To Work as Part of the Process

Santa Barbara County CWS Linkages Role

- Addresses the reasons that brought a family to the attention of the Court and CWS which were listed in the petition filed with the court.
- Writes a case plan with the family that lists:
 - Service objectives
 - Services expected to bring about the identified needed areas of change
- Assist in family reunification by coordinating services with CalWORKs

Santa Barbara County CWS Linkages Identified Cases

- Works with other assigned CalWorks, Welfare to Work and Resource Support Team staff assigned to the case.
- Verifies coordination of service delivery
- Verifies that the combined case plans meet the clients needs while not overwhelming the client
- Ensures that staff review client progress, identify client strengths and identify obstacles and solutions.

Jackie: A Case Study

*"Navigating Barriers -
Realizing Potential"*

Jackie: A Case Study – The Start

- Single Mother with One Child
- Originally a VFM case in 6/2009 – CBO Services
- Client ICT's – Inter County Transfer - in 8/09 to Avoid CWS services and other troubles
- Returned to SB County 2 Months later
- Child Detained by CWS in 12/09 – Age 1 at the time of removal - due to various issues
- Determined to be AB429 Linkages Case – Active CalWORKs at the time of removal
- “Oldest” active Linkages case in SB County

More In Regards To Jackie

- When child removed – 1st Linkages client to request General assistance (GA/GR) services
- Was originally non-coop with Linkages process under VFM rules
- Once removal occurred – Jackie stepped up her participation and became pro-active in her services
- TDM's have been held many times along the way to discuss issues, progress and next steps – from removal to collaboration, all the way to the goal of reunifying the family

The Dilemma

- Jackie became pregnant with second child while making progress in the program
- The father of the unborn was a convicted drug felon (parolee) she met in group therapy
- Jackie was in Project Preemie – perinatal TLC program for recovering mother's
- Jackie was adamant about maintaining relationship with the unborn's father
- This was seen as a large dilemma/potential barrier to reunification services

A Fresh Start

- Jackie has been making great progress in her court plan
- She has met all the requirements and attending all meetings, groups, court dates, etc.
- Father of the new child (non-detained) entered Linkages as a volunteer – Also, no longer on parole
- Supervised visits going well and over nights have started
- Clients in transitional housing through a shelter program and pending permanent housing
- Client showing good signs of self-sufficiency and has stayed clean and sober

The Final Challenge - Reunification

- Client has current CalWORKs and WTW services due to common / non-removed child and is doing excellent
- Client is making good progress with Mental Health / RST and is proactive in obtaining services
- Removed child has a lawyer / advocate that was not supporting the reunification due to the relationship which was started with an ex-drug felon (at the time).
- This is the most costly Linkages case in SB County -(RST funding):
 - Perinatal TLC Costs \$14,000 Individual Counseling \$1,700
- Last TDM included over 15 representatives from different agencies, CBO's and was a successful collaboration
- Final court date occurred on 5/23/11 - CWS made final recommendations to court
- Final Court Decision - Reunification

Thinking Ahead To The Future

- Continued Collaborative Effort Between All Agencies
- All Team Members Required For Success
- Management Commitment Is Essential
- MOU's Are Key Elements
- Client Buy-In Is Needed
- Lessons Learned Should Be Acted Upon and Processes Continually Improved and Refined

Challenges

- Staff Is Still Learning About Linkages
- Clients Choosing Not To Participate
- Training Process For Incoming Staff
- Fluctuation of Staff Due to Economy
- Notification of Closed Cases / termination of Services
- Post – Reunification Services

Santa Barbara County – True Linkages Success

- Basic Linkages Processes are in place countywide at all 3 District Offices
- Accurate numbers being kept and maintained in all offices
- Quick referrals (48 hours) / coordination between CWS / CalWORKS / Welfare To Work and RST Mental Health Services
- Strong Support of Management and Supervisors from all sides of the house
- True coordination of services occurring in the county for Linkages cases
- Families – Both adults and children are receiving crucial services that they need that will assist them in having a strong and healthy reunification



Questions?

Follow Up Call

To Be Scheduled In Near Future

amlopez@co.santa-barbara.ca.us

m.laurel@sbcsocialserv.org

I.Walch@sbcsocialserv.org