

# KEEPING LINKED



## Meet CFPIC's New Prevention Project Director: Derek Slama

With an eye to the future, CFPIC hired Derek Slama, Prevention Project Director, who comes to us with prevention experience with the Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) California Department of Social Services (CDSS). He is currently assisting the Linkages Prevention & Early Intervention (PEI) Committee search and analyze Needs Assessment Tools to be considered by that committee for adapting and testing.

To help us get acquainted, Derek answered the following questions:

### What are you most looking forward to in your new role?

*I'm very excited to join the CFPIC team and be a part of moving prevention efforts forward! It's a very transformative moment for child welfare and prevention, and I'm thrilled to be a part of reforming how we approach and work with families in CA.*

### How did you get interested in social services?

*I had wanted to work in the service field as long as I can remember, never knowing exactly what I wanted to do. When I was younger, my 1-year-old nephew was taken out of the home and placed in foster care. It ripped our worlds apart and changed everything about my nephew's life, still seeing lasting effects on him to day. As I got older and learned about social work, I was sold. I started reading different books on feminism and queer theory, and*

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*and would even sneak into my sister's MSW classes to listen.*

*For me, social work was more than a job - it was a way of seeing and understanding the world and myself.*

**Favorite show?**

*The Fall of the House of Usher.*

**What is your favorite quote?**

*"Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that." - Martin Luther King Jr.*

**What is the best concert you've been to?**

*Post Malone at Bottlerock 2023 - great show!*

**What is your favorite thing about living in California?**

*So many things! But my favorite thing about California is that it has everything for everyone. The mountains, the beach, the snow, the desert. it's all here!*

Derek gave permission to share this personal information but also wanted us to know he served as the CalWORKs Family Engagement Coordinator, implementing the CalWORKs Home Visiting Program pilot throughout Sacramento County. In this role, he worked to integrate prevention services and referral systems within county Self-Sufficiency offices and programs to seamlessly connect families to community-based supports.

Welcome Derek! We know you will help move our Linkages prevention efforts forward!

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## Committee Updates

### TAY

Our Linkages TAY Workgroup continues to gather information and refine our practice guidance for counties wishing to include support for transition age youth (TAY) who have left foster care and need support to access services and support as an adult.

At our meeting this month, we reviewed findings from multiple sources identifying the need for more support for this population:

- In the 2020 CalYOUTH study, Chapin Hall found that young people who exited foster care at adulthood experience more hardships than their peers across multiple measures of well-being including food insecurity, employment instability, poverty, physical and mental health problems, and involvement with the criminal justice system.
- A 2023 report from the Urban Institute identified that former foster youth need specific assistance to access services - in particular they need help navigating application processes and they need assistance to restart services when their circumstances change.

- A 2020 article in the international journal Child Abuse and Neglect confirms that children whose parents were in foster care are more likely to experience child maltreatment than other children.
- As TAY have been identified as a population with more hardships, a need for help to access services and increased risk of future Child Welfare System involvement, it is imperative that we identify best practices for connecting TAY with concrete supports that can decrease their stressors and thereby prevent future child maltreatment - we think Linkages may be one way to do that!

You can contribute to our effort by completing our [survey](#) to share what happens in your county to support TAY during and after their exit from care. So far 17 Linkages counties have completed the survey and we have learned a lot about the ways counties come together in support of TAY. Please help us get an accurate picture of what you are doing by completing the survey!

## PEI: Making Progress!

Although the Linkages 2.0 Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) approach is the newest phase of the Linkages 20+ year history, the PEI Committee's work has been taking shape and is getting some traction!

The Committee's first effort, as we have reported before, was exploration of what Primary Prevention means in the Linkages context. The Committee's work in the area resulted in the development of the Protective Factors Brochure and the drafting of an All County Information Notice (ACIN) intended to share the Brochure with the counties. We were pleased to hear from our partners at CDSS that the ACIN, with links to the Brochure in English and Spanish, has been issued. You can access the [ACIN and the Brochure](#) on the newly developed Prevention Toolkit Page on the CFPIC website.

The Committee has turned its attention to what Early Intervention means in the Linkages Context. The primary focus of this work has been researching feasible approaches to the implementation of a simple screening tool that CalWORKs and other benefits programs might use to help families identify community supports to address issues that they are facing. The Committee did some work with Evident Change (the developer of SDM) to consider what the development of a tool would entail. Unfortunately the cost of this work made it an unlikely avenue to explore. As an alternative, we have wanted to research existing tools across the country to see if there is something that we can adopt/adapt for our purposes. Fortunately, CFPIC has a new Prevention Program Director, Derek Slama (featured elsewhere in this newsletter), who has taken up this challenge and is doing amazing work in identifying tools that we can assess in our efforts to develop something feasible for California. The Committee will be exploring Derek's work in the coming weeks and we hope that we will be able to report significant success in the future.

The Committee has also reviewed the [CalWORKs Child Only](#) research that was done a number of years ago by Richard Speigman, which is available on the CFPIC website. Dr. Speigman will also be discussing his work at the 2024 Linkages Conference. This research indicates that the families in the CalWORKs Child Only caseload are at higher risk, with greater needs, than other families in CalWORKs. This knowledge is helping the Committee assess where it might suggest the direction of resources to help these families access services that can help mitigate their risk factors and increase child and family well-being.



**Protective Factors Building Strong Families:**  
Resources and Tips

**Why Protective Factors?**  
Protective factors help families succeed and thrive, even in the face of risks and challenges. There are many ways that you can build on your own family's strengths and offer support to other families when they need it.

**Five Protective Factors**

- Parental Resilience**  
Resilience is managing stress and functioning well, even when things are difficult.
- Social Connections**  
It's easier to handle parenting challenges when positive relationships with family, friends, and neighbors are consistent.
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development**  
By learning what children need in order to thrive, you can provide them the best start in life.
- Concrete Support in Times of Need**  
Knowing where to get help in times of need can make things a lot easier.
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children**  
Helping children develop social-emotional competence teaches them to manage emotions and build healthy relationships.

## **Families Are Stronger Together Learning Collaborative: FAST LC**

Partners from Tribal TANF, the CDSS Family Engagement and Empowerment Division; the CDSS Safety, Prevention, and Early Intervention Branch; and CFPIC are continuing our work together in the FAST LC. We are focusing on supporting Linkages by:



1. Building strategies to expand Linkages and engaging input from Tribes and people with lived experience in our Linkages work
2. Developing a statewide shared resource and training platform in CalPrevents
3. Finding or developing a tool to identify prevention service needs for families
4. Exploring and overcoming challenges around data linking and sharing between TANF and Child Welfare

Are you interested in learning more or contributing to our work? Join the FAST LC Workshop at the Linkages Convening! See you there!

### **County Evaluation**

Thanks to RDA and Orange, Riverside and Sonoma for continuing the complex work of the Linkages evaluation process. They are currently launching the Client Survey (4/1/24 -5/1/24) to gain a better understanding of the impact of Linkages and give families a forum to provide their perspective. This is exciting news since we believe that serving our families by providing coordinated case planning, sharing of resources and collaborating to meet common goals for both Child Welfare and CalWORKs/WtW programs makes a difference for families.

RDA Consulting will be giving information in a workshop at the Linkages Convening on the first afternoon. They will be presenting key findings from the process evaluation of the Linkages programs across the three counties that volunteered to participate in the evaluation. In addition, RDA will share the research methodology and tools developed and you will have the opportunity to consider how you might evaluate your Linkages strategy at your county. **We hope to see you there!**

## **Key Take-aways from the 2024 Statewide Collaborative Prevention Convening**

This year's Statewide Prevention Convening was an amazing event with broad participation and a focus on *Nurturing Strong Partnerships to Activate Your Comprehensive Prevention Plan*.

Hosted by Strategies Technical Assistance (TA), the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA), the Chief Probation Officers of California Foundation (CPOCF), the Child & Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC), and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS); the event had over 823 participants with 48 counties and 19 Tribes represented.

Of course we want to be sure you saw our Linkages presentation, [Leveraging CalWORKs for Primary Prevention via Linkages](#), but we also picked out some other presentations

listed below) that you may find interesting and helpful. You can also check out the [Strategies TA YouTube Channel](#) for all the content from the convening.

- [Tribal Partnerships are Prevention](#)
- [Cultivating Organizational and Collaborative Cultures for Equity and Upstream Impact](#)
- [Partnering for Prevention in Kern County](#)
- [Economic and Concrete Supports: Key to Reducing Child Welfare System Involvement](#)



The poster is titled "MARCH 4-5, 2024" and "NURTURING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS TO ACTIVATE YOUR COMPREHENSIVE PREVENTION PLAN". It features logos for CDSS, CWDA, and CFPIC, along with a central graphic of a person with arms raised inside a colorful circle. The agenda is split into two columns for Day 1 (March 4) and Day 2 (March 5).

Day 1 - March 4 9AM - 2PM, Virtual	Day 2 - March 5 9AM - 4PM, Hybrid
9:00 AM - Welcome by Convening Planning Partners	9:00 AM - Welcome by Convening Planning Partners
9:20 AM - Welcome by California State Leaders	9:20 AM - Welcome by Janay Eustace, Child Abuse Prevention Center
9:50 AM - Tribal Engagement Dialogue	9:30AM - County Team Time: Welcome
10:35 AM - Break	10:05 AM - Peer Sharing - Community Engagement Reflections
10:45 AM - Workshops Session #1	10:35 AM - Framing the Rest of the Day
12:00 PM - Lunch Break	10:50 PM - County Team Time: Getting Started!
12:35 PM - Workshops Session #2	12:20 PM - Lunch Break
1:50 PM - Closing	1:20 PM - Q&A Session with Junious Williams, Part 1
	1:40 PM - County Team Time: Charting our Course of Action
	3:10 PM - Q&A Session with Junious Williams and CDSS, Part 2
	3:25 PM - California Prevention Landscape Presentation
	3:40 PM - Presentation on CalPrevents, Statewide Connect
	3:50 PM - Closing Appreciations

## Effective. Efficient. Essential.

By Danna Fabella, Linkages Director

I've been extremely fortunate to have been involved in promoting and supporting Linkages in county practice between 2007 and 2016, and then again since 2022 as we have embarked on Linkages 2.0. In the current phase of Linkages, CDSS and CWDA are funding our organization (CFPIC) to support expanding the Linkages from mutual families being served in both the Child Welfare and CalWORKs systems to looking at these two populations through a prevention lens. This framework acknowledges how poverty and the lack of access to resources and supports affects disadvantaged families, who are disproportionately families of color. Linkages 2.0 views CalWORKs as a Primary Prevention strategy since it supports families through provision of benefits (cash, medical, food stamps, housing, etc.) to promote family well-being. Both CalWORKs and Child Welfare have Secondary Prevention (Early Intervention) services for eligible families; examples of these services are Family Stabilization, Home Visiting, and Differential Response - services that support families and prevent child welfare intervention.

In 2002, 13 counties stepped forward to take the lead in developing innovative service collaboration between Child Welfare and CalWORKs/Welfare to Work (WtW). This was expanded to 30 counties under the Federal grant received in FFY 2006/07. Many of those counties continue their collaboration despite the absence of support that they received through the Federal Grant; these counties and others are part of the current collaboration that started in 2022. The ongoing accomplishments of the 36 Linkages counties provide ongoing evidence that Linkages is an **effective** strategy. Coordinated case planning has been further supported with the passage of AB 429 that allowed WtW supportive services to continue even when child/children are placed into foster care when the child welfare case plan indicates it is necessary for reunification. More recently, AB 135 was passed to allow for the continuance of cash aid during reunification (for eligible parents) when deemed necessary and in the child welfare case plan.



There certainly are many reasons for child welfare to collaborate with CalWORKS; leveraging the benefits and services provided by CalWORKs is one reason. Another very important factor, which we have learned from our survey and in talking with families, is that families tend to see the case managers in CalWORKs more positively than child welfare workers. As a former child welfare worker that does make me sad but it highlights the fact that it is scary for families to be part of a system where they might lose their children. It is an **efficient** strategy to collaborate with the CalWORKs case manager when there is a shared family. It is also **essential** to use that positive relationship to engage parents and return children as soon as possible if they must be removed.

While Coordinated Case Planning is the cornerstone of the Linkages Collaboration, moving upstream to support families sooner aligns Linkages with child welfare's focus on prevention and the CalWORKs 2.0 focus on family engagement. We are pleased that in 2024 we are working with 36 California counties to support the collaboration between CalWORKs and Child Welfare using the prevention framework. We established the **Effective, Efficient and Essential** tagline during the Federal Grant and we still believe it's true. Spread the word in your county by downloading the [communication brochure](#) in the Linkages Communication Toolkit.



## Last Call for Registration! Linkages Upstream: Applying the Prevention Framework

We are excited to meet with you and collaborate in person at our Annual Convening coming up on April 23-25, 2024 at the Doubletree by Hilton in Sacramento. We are expecting over 200 people representing Linkages across California. Register now so you don't miss out!

[Click Here](#) to register. If you have questions feel free to reach out to [Andrea.Lewis@CFPIC.org](mailto:Andrea.Lewis@CFPIC.org) or [Danna.Fabella@CFPIC.org](mailto:Danna.Fabella@CFPIC.org)

There's still time to make a quick 30 second video using your smartphone to tell us "Why Linkages Matters to You" - we want to hear from you, your colleagues and families in your county. Let us know why your CalWORKs and Child Welfare collaboration is important, inspiring, and impactful.

We can't wait to compile all your voices into a video we will show at our upcoming Linkages convening to inspire other counties and remind us all of the importance of the work we do. All the info you need (including a Release of Information Form) is included in this [Video Flyer](#).

The deadline for submitting your video is Friday, April 12th. Please send your video to Mia Stizzo at [mia.stizzo@cfpic.org](mailto:mia.stizzo@cfpic.org), and reach out to her with any questions.

We need you!!

## Share Your Voice About Why Linkages Matters!

## Linkages Training Update: Gratitude & Progress

Many thanks to the Linkages teams who were able to review our three new training modules and provide feedback! Your subject matter expertise is invaluable and our curriculum developers are working now to incorporate your changes and prepare for the upcoming pilots.

Pilots will be held over zoom in April and May:

- 4/16/24 9:00 am - 4:00 pm Linkages Overview
- 4/18/24 9:00 am - 4:00 pm CalWORKs and Emergency Response
- 5/29/24 9:00 am - 4:00 pm Coordinated Case Planning



If you are interested in participating, please email [melissa.connelly@cfpic.org](mailto:melissa.connelly@cfpic.org) to let us know!

## Blending, Braiding, & Leveraging: Thinking Strategically About Funding to Support Linkages

County Linkages teams often ask for more information about funding because they want to be sure they are maximizing all available funding streams to support the great work they are doing with Linkages. While every county is different and Linkages teams should first consult with their internal fiscal teams about any funding strategy, we wanted to share some resources about blending, braiding, and leveraging funding - 3 common ways to maximize resources.

Blending funding refers to a practice of combining funding from multiple sources to support an activity of common interest. This means allocated funds from separate sources are combined in a single budget and expenditures are not tracked back to a specific individual source.



Braiding funding refers to combining funding sources to support a common goal while maintaining the specific program identity of each individual funding source. This strategy is used when activities meet goals for multiple programs and can therefore be supported by funding from multiple funding streams. While braiding funding allows for multiple programs to contribute to the total cost of services, funding streams remain separate; costs and revenues are tracked separately for each funding source. When combining funds in this way, counties must be careful to make sure funds are used in a way that eliminates duplication and applies a fair allocation of costs across funding sources.

Leveraging funding is a strategy to use funds from different sources that have a shared interest in meeting specific outcomes but have rules or limitations associated with them that preclude blending or braiding. When Linkages teams timestudy across programs (e.g., Child Welfare staff using Welfare to Work timestudy codes) they are leveraging CalWorks funding to support Child Welfare service provision to mutual families. Similarly, using Child Welfare funded services to meet Welfare to Work requirements is another way Linkages teams leverage funding – in this case using Child Welfare funds to support mutual families meeting Welfare to Work requirements.

Looking to the future, CalAIM and Enhanced Care Management are introducing new opportunities for innovation in funding. CalAIM is a Medi-Cal improvement initiative from the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) which includes changes to delivery systems, programs, and payment. Enhanced Care Management (ECM) is a key change to Medi-Cal that promotes an interdisciplinary approach to care through systematic coordination of services. Counties are recognizing that many people served by Child Welfare may be eligible for ECM and are investigating how to leverage ECM to support care coordination.

Relevant resources:

1. [Housing and Services Resource Center \(HSRC\) Webinar](#): This presentation is mainly about housing, but it includes some strategies related to braiding funding and service coordination.
2. [The Service Coordination Partnerships Tool Kit](#) provides tools and resources related to building cross-sector partnerships for service coordination, identifying funding and potential partners that support service coordination.
3. This [resource](#) from the National Center for Healthy Safe Children offers information about innovative funding strategies.
4. This [CalAIM Enhanced Care Management Policy Guide](#) offers information about ECM and how it can be used to enhance service delivery to vulnerable populations.



## Open Office Hours for TA

Do you have questions related to Linkages? Are you working on your 2024 Work Plan? Would you like to connect with your peers? Would you like to provide an update related to your Linkages Collaboration in your County?

Your LINKAGES Project Associate Andrea Lewis would love to hear from you!!

We have Open Office Hours created for your convenience!

[Click here](#) to schedule your TA/Guidance Session now.



## Let's Get Together: Upcoming Events

### Linkages TA/Guidance Calls

- [Click here](#) to schedule a call with the CFPIC Linkages team to promote Linkages efforts in your county.

### Annual Convening

- April 23–25, 2024, Doubletree by Hilton, Sacramento CA

*Mark Your  
Calendars!*

If you have any suggestions or contributions for the next newsletter, let us know!



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