

KEEPING LINKED



It was 20 Years Ago Today...

On September 11, 2024, CFPIC celebrated 20 years in supporting public Human Services agencies in the implementation of best practices to support California's most vulnerable children, families and aging and disabled adults. CFPIC was created by the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) in 2004 to "advance the development of sound public policy

and promote statewide program excellence in public human services through research, education, training and technical assistance targeted to unmet needs identified by human services agencies and funding partners." The evolution of CFPIC and its vision for the future are described in its recently published [20th Anniversary Report](#).



As stated in the 20th Anniversary Report, "during our first three years, CFPIC established momentum by identifying, responding, and adapting to the immediate needs of public Human Services agencies. CFPIC engaged with partners, providing a home for pilot projects, and generating improvements in Human Services practices." An essential part of that early growth was the adoption of the Linkages Project.

The history of Linkages actually began earlier than CFPIC and that project (now a program) has a 25 year history, which is described in detail on the [Linkages website](#).

The CalWORKs Child Welfare Partnership work that became Linkages began soon after the enactment of the federal TANF legislation, when a delegation from California visited El Paso County, Colorado, to learn about ways that they were using TANF funding to promote collaboration with their Child Welfare program. A number of state/county committees were established to develop protocols

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that could be used to provide structure to a partnership between CalWORKs and Child Welfare programs in California. Once this work was completed, the Stuart Foundation funded the California Center for Research on Women and Families (CCRWF) to convene county teams to pilot the Linkages approach. When CFPIC was created in 2004, the leadership of CCRWF recognized that the Linkages work was well-suited to the mission of CFPIC and would be well-served as part of CFPIC's work in supporting the partnership between the state and counties to improve public Human Services across California. The transfer of funding and facilitation of the Linkages work were transferred to CFPIC in 2005 and has remained one of its flagship programs ever since.



As CFPIC has evolved, so has Linkages. Once the Stuart Foundation funding ended, CFPIC partnered with the CDSS Office of Child Abuse Prevention to successfully apply for a five-year federal demonstration grant that enabled Linkages to continue to strengthen its approach to CalWORKs/Child Welfare collaboration and to expand the number of participating counties and to evaluate the project. Following the completion of the federal demonstration, CDSS continued to fund Linkages for another three years, followed by two years of funding authorized by CWDA from the TANF Single Allocation. Once funding was discontinued, Linkages continued to operate in a few California counties without support from CFPIC but without this support the program lost its ability to provide a statewide approach to evolving along with California's CalWORKs and Child Welfare programs.



In 2018, after a two year lapse, CFPIC was asked by CDSS to join its statewide efforts to revive Linkages as part of its Child Welfare Federal Program Improvement Plan (PIP). In recognition of the increasing focus on strengthening family functioning to prevent child maltreatment in both CalWORKs and Child Welfare, the plans for developing a revived approach to Linkages was rooted in California's Prevention framework. Out of this work, Linkages 2.0 was born, building on the excellent Tertiary Prevention work of Linkages 1.0 and adding the exploration of how Linkages can provide Prevention and Early Intervention services to families of both of the major Human Services programs, CalWORKs and

For the past 18 months, CFPIC has been developing a strategic plan to move the organization forward, and the central tenets of that plan are embodied in the CFPIC's continued commitment to supporting the growth and development of Linkages across California. The following elements of the [CFPIC Strategic Plan](#) are reflected in everything that Linkages does and demonstrate the centrality of Linkages to CFPIC's past and future:

MISSION: We partner with leaders in building capacity at every level to address emerging needs and opportunities in Human Services.

VISION: To be the key partner in creating transformational, positive, and lasting change in human services.

VALUES: Excellence through:

- **Inclusivity and Collaboration** - we invite diverse voices and partners to the table.
- **Integrity and Accountability** - we engender trust by holding to our commitments.
- **Responsiveness and Adaptability** - we keep lines of communication open and make course corrections as needed.
- **Lived and Professional Expertise** - we employ and engage a diverse group of public human services professionals and lived experts.
- **Learning and Growth** - we support staff in identifying and achieving personal and professional goals.

GOAL #2: Support human service system capacity building toward transformative change.

- **Objective:** Bring the voice of lived experience and community to inform program development, implementation, and service delivery
- **Objective:** Expand opportunities for integration across human services disciplines
- **Objective:** Support communication and understanding between state departments and county agencies

Committee Updates

TAY

We are continuing our work to identify ways to use the Linkages spirit of collaboration to support young adults who are transitioning out of the Child Welfare System. This quarter we held key informant interviews and focus groups to build our body of knowledge about what young adults need and how innovative programs are meeting their needs.

We held a focus group with an amazing group of former foster youth who shared their experiences and the challenges they faced as they transitioned out of extended foster care. We conducted interviews with Calla Peltier-Olson from the Humboldt TAY Division and the Humboldt County Transition-Age Youth Collaboration (HCTAYC), Erika Pollard from the Los Angeles County Independent Living Program, Simone Higgs-Monroe from the Children and Family Services Citizen Review Panel Independent Living Subcommittee, the team from Just-in-Time San Diego and Cynthia Vatalaro and Laura Underwood from CDSS.

We are compiling findings and building toward a webinar that will allow for sharing some of the awesome work happening around the state and hearing from young people about their experiences and the challenges they faced as they transitioned to adult serving systems.

As always, we'd love to hear from anyone with innovations and best practices they would like to share or any questions they'd like us to address. Please reach out to melissa.connelly@cfpic.org!

PEI

The Linkages 2.0 Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Committee continues to move forward in the efforts that it has established in its work plan, as follows:

Linkages Primary Prevention (see below for further clarification about the definition of Primary Prevention*)

The Committee's activities in this area have focused on the development and distribution (via a [CDSS All County Information Notice](#)) a Protective Factors Brochure. This customizable [brochure](#) highlights the 5 Protective Factors and provides space for each county to fill in local resources that provide services related to each Protective Factor. While the brochure was developed for use by CalWORKs staff it is a resource that can be provided to as wide an audience as each county would like (including other benefits applicants and recipients, Early Childhood Education centers, Medical Clinics, etc.) The Committee has recently surveyed counties to determine if and how the brochure is being used. 17 counties responded and 6 shared innovative ways they have customized the brochure for distribution in their county, including a poster version. Several others are working on developing and implementing the brochure. County examples of the uses of the brochure will be posted on the [CFPIC Linkages Website](#). If you are interested in sharing your version of the brochure or you would like support with customization, please contact andrea.lewis@cfpic.org.

Linkages Secondary Prevention

The Committee has focused in this area on the identification of a screening process that will help CalWORKs families identify services that they can access in their communities to address possible risk factors that are identified in the screening process. The Committee, with the expert assistance of Derek Slama, CFPIC's Prevention Program Director, began this work by researching existing

screening tools that might serve the Committee's purpose. Unfortunately, no existing tool was found that could be easily adopted, but elements of various tools looked promising. In addition to exploring possible tools, the Committee has also considered the various ways that such a tool could be used---possibly administered by county staff in partnership with CalWORKs families, or as a self-administered form, or available at a county kiosk. Derek has convened a committee whose members will work with their local partners to answer fundamental questions that will direct the further work of the Committee in this area.

The Committee is also discussing in more detail the work that was presented at the last Linkages Convening regarding the vulnerability of the CalWORKs Child Only population. One concern raised at the Convening was that the research presented was from several years ago so the Committee is investigating more recent research, including a recent publication from [Chapin Hall](#) that highlighted the growing size of the Child Only population nationwide.

Another focus of the Committee will be further exploration of work that was undertaken in Linkages 1.0, whereby Child Welfare Services staff provided information to referral and case families about available economic supports (CalWORKs, CalFresh and Medi-Cal). The Linkages website has examples of this work from Los Angeles and San Francisco, which the Committee will explore further and add to in its continuing work.

Linkages Primary Prevention Conforms to Traditional Definition of Primary Prevention!

We were recently asked whether Linkages Primary Prevention deviates from the traditional definition of Primary Prevention and our answer is definitely, "no, it is no different."

The traditional definition of Primary Prevention is the one that is promoted by our partners at the Office of Child Abuse Prevention in "[A Framework for Preventing Child Abuse by the Promotion of Healthy Families & Communities](#)", where Primary Prevention is defined as follows:



These activities are directed at the general population to strengthen communities and improve child well-being by focusing on the social determinants of health, defined as the conditions into which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life.

One of the Primary Strategies listed is, "Improving economic stability, transportation and access to supports," which definitely aligns with our Linkages work.

In Linkages, we define "general population" as *the universe of applicants for, and recipients of CalWORKs. Primary Prevention resources are offered to everyone in the defined universe, irrespective of whether they are experiencing any risk factors. We do not believe that just because a family applies for, or receives, public benefits that they are experiencing risk factors, and therefore providing the Protective Factors Brochure does not constitute a secondary prevention strategy. As noted above, the PEI Committee is working to develop a strategy for identifying service needs based on risk factors as its Secondary Prevention strategy.*

FAST-LC

As the Families Are Stronger Together Learning Collaborative comes to an end on 9/30/24, we are reflecting on lessons learned and planning for next steps to continue the work we started within the collaborative.

Throughout this amazing opportunity to build connections and share best practices, we felt really drawn to learning more about families who are not accessing all the supports they could receive. We know concrete supports help mitigate conditions that contribute to increased risk for child maltreatment and we know we are missing serving some families who could benefit from concrete supports. We also know that if we can bridge that gap and engage with families we are missing, we will see real progress on prevention in California. We plan to move forward with additional research to better understand how to bridge this gap. We are developing some research questions that will drive future work in this area, specifically looking at concrete supports offered in Differential Response programs, and better understanding the intersections among offering concrete supports, imposition of sanctions, good cause determinations, and avoiding involvement in the child welfare system.

We were also reminded throughout the collaborative that things work best when communities lead change efforts to retool the services they need. We are using this principle to drive our outreach and engagement efforts with Tribes, Tribal TANF organizations, counties, and service providers as we build our work plan for Tribal Linkages. We are excited to see what connections we can make and what Tribal Linkages can become.

We are also excited to have strong state level support for continuing to grow and expand Linkages across California as we outreach to counties and work with state partners to share information about Linkages, how it is implemented across the state, and how it benefits families.

Overall, the FAST LC experience helped us build new connections and identify shared goals that will allow for future growth and innovation for Linkages! Time well spent!

Program Updates

Statewide Webinar: Working Together to Strengthen Families

On August 22, 2024, the CFPIC Linkages team hosted a Linkages Webinar “Working Together to Strengthen Families” with a focus on Coordinated Case Planning (CCP) between CalWORKs and Child Welfare. We were excited that 76 participants from 26 counties joined the webinar. We continue to hear from Linkages teams that CCP is a hot topic and an area for interest as confirmed by the planning survey. The real heart of the collaboration process for families is the coordination of activities and providing a framework for gathering, engaging with families,



and leveraging supports and resources that can immediately benefit them. CCP assists the family through consolidation of case plans from both Child Welfare and Welfare to Work allowing families to focus on their family reunification/family maintenance case plan and concurrently achieve parental success and self-sufficiency.

The webinar included regional breakout groups to allow time for direct peer connections to promote learning and sharing. We know from experience that counties learn best from one another and this peer sharing opportunity proved once again that *Sharing is Caring!!*

We also had presentations from two Linkages counties, Santa Clara and Humboldt.

The Santa Clara Team included Lolita Castillo, Wendy Chen, Rachelle Chavez, Erica Van Skike, Nancy Ngo, Rosa Oseguera, and Stephanie Jiminez. Their team shared the process of coordination related to client identification, joint meetings, and other ways they collaborate. They also provided examples of forms used including transitioning the CWS Case plan to the WTW 2 for both VFM and FR. Santa Clara also shared information on the “warm handoff” transition process from Linkages back to the regular WTW program. We also heard from staff members as they shared their experience related to the impact that Linkages has on the families being served.

Coleen Ridlon, Linkages Coordinator, Humboldt county shared their mutual family identification process; examples of the transmittal form and email correspondence they utilize; their process for service coordination and provided examples of their process for transitioning the CWS case plan into the WTW 2.

[Click here](#) to get the PowerPoint and other materials.

We appreciated those who took the time to share feedback after the event. We got some great reviews and constructive feedback that we will use plan future events:

96% of respondents reported the webinar somewhat, mostly, or totally provided new information or inspiration from the information shared.

51% of survey takers stated that hearing about and seeing examples from both Santa Clara and Humboldt Counties was most helpful.

41 % said it was the regional discussions; and an additional **6.9%** stated that the CCP overview and examples provided were most helpful for them.

We loved seeing what participants plan to take back to their teams:

Some notes from our attendees:

Peer sharing opportunities allow for counties to make connections and get great Ideas!

Great Overview!

We liked hearing how other counties are making Linkages work!

Very insightful!



- More involvement with the CalWORKs eligibility staff
- Potential access to CWS/CMS for Employment Services Counselor (Linkages Liaison)
- Creating a general email box for Self Sufficiency Linkages questions or assistance
- CFTs tailored for Linkages
- Streamlining communication between Social Workers and WTW Workers

We also got some great suggestions for making future webinars even more useful for Linkages teams:

- More time to process and ask questions with the presenters
- Have presenters present to separate groups
- Breakout sessions per job title instead of region



Planning for the 2024 Linkages Regionals

The CFPIC Linkages team continues to support the Linkages Collaborative by providing opportunities for sharing implementation strategies and best practices with participating counties.

Each quarter we host a webinar or peer sharing event that pertains to the priorities requested via surveys that are sent out periodically. In preparation for this year's final peer sharing/learning opportunity, we sent out surveys to Linkages Coordinators in each region (Northern / Mountain Valley, Central, Bay, and Southern) with the request to decide whether the regionals would be in-person or held via Zoom. The survey indicated the majority in each region preferred virtual meetings to allow more of their Linkages team to attend since many counties have travel restrictions. Additionally, each region had the opportunity to participate and choose the day, time and topics that they hope to discuss at their regional meeting. In response to input we heard from those who participated in

the statewide webinar on Coordinated Case Planning, we are designing the regional meetings to include more time for discussion and conversation with one another (as opposed to more "presentations"). This is an opportunity for YOUR County to share your process, procedure, and/or best practices with your peer counties within your region.

Registration can be accessed by clicking on the flyer here.

To join the planning sessions please send an email to andrea.lewis@cfpic.org who will send you an invitation to the planning meetings. Please watch your emails and CalPrevents for collaboration and updates as we continue to finalize the agendas for each region.



Evaluation

Last month, we included information on Key Themes found during the qualitative data collected through Key Informant Interviews and Focus Groups and if you click [HERE](#) you can read that article again. We are now in a new phase of the evaluation with Orange and Riverside counties conducting a case review process to learn more about how their counties are providing coordinated case planning to families mutually involved in child welfare and CalWORKs. This tool was collaboratively developed with the evaluation counties, CFPIC, and RDA (the external evaluator). County staff have pulled a random sample of eligible families and will be conducting case reviews through December. Using this tool, we hope to better understand how coordinated case planning improves outcomes as outlined in our Theory of Change. RDA is working with the Research, Automation and Data Division (RADD) at CDSS on agreements for sharing outcome data so that RDA can analyze the case review and outcomes data to produce a final evaluation report in the summer of 2025.

Linkages Success Story: Working Together for a Great Outcome in Orange County

Orange County was one of the Pioneer Linkages Counties that started working on collaboration between TANF and Child Welfare even prior to the Federal Linkages Grant that ran from FFY 2006/2007 to 20013/2014. Orange County has stated to the CFPIC Linkages team that they do not see Linkages as a project or a program; it is the way they do business. They created a Mutual Client team which ensures coordination of staffs, services, and systems that work together to support successful outcomes for families. Collaborating and leveraging various programs leads to success for the family.

The following story was submitted by Jim Boyd, a social worker in the Mutual Client unit about a mother who successfully completed her CFS Family Maintenance case after 17 months while residing in an intensive residential treatment program. It highlights the work of their Linkages strategy and that coordination and effective communication matters.

The following services and support were provided to the family:

- intensive substance use treatment
- life skills classes
- personal counseling
- onsite childcare
- job assistance
- financial aid for transitioning to an apartment
- support in finding and funding new childcare.

The CFS Senior Social Worker facilitated her placement in the Prototypes program at Tustin Family Campus (TFC) after she left another program. She completed a 24-month residential treatment program, receiving intensive substance use treatment and personal counseling, along with onsite childcare. Cooperation was essential in easing her transition out of the residential program post her CFS case. Effective communication between Child & Family Services and Family Stabilization Services workers ensured her needs were met without duplication of services. The Tustin Family Campus' strong community partnerships helped the mother build her support network.

While at TFC, the client obtained employment. She initially obtained part time employment and then obtained full-time employment upon exiting TFC. While at TFC, the mother was able to save money and upon exit from TFC a plan was developed for the mother to enter a transitional housing program for four months. The transitional housing program helped the mother obtain an apartment. The mother was referred to CalAIM and CalAIM paid for the move in fees, one month of rent, and all the furniture for the apartment.

Thank you, Jim, and Orange county for sharing this wonderful success story with us. It is truly and inspiration.

The client expressed her gratitude for all the support and services, particularly thanking her Mutual Client Case Manager. **"Thanks, Jim! You've seriously been amazing throughout my journey!"**

"[Mom] was incredibly dedicated and kept her priorities straight during her open dependency case with CFS. She completed all her services timely and was able to close her case while maintaining her sobriety and being a wonderful mom."

- Social Worker

"Working with Linkages families can be truly challenging but seeing a family work so hard towards their goals and eventually achieve their independence is immensely rewarding." - Mutual Client Case Manager



Linkages Curricula Update

Our Linkages training materials for Linkages Overview, Linkages and Emergency Response, and Coordinated Case Planning are complete! They are posted on the [Linkages Training Toolkit](#) and available to your teams as well as your local Regional Training Academy. In the coming weeks we will record a version of the Linkages Overview and post it in the toolkit as well, so check back for that soon!

If you have any questions about the materials, please contact melissa.connelly@cfpic.org!

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?

The CFPIC Linkages Team 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

FR Cash Aid (AB135) Webinar

October 22, 2024 | 1:30 to 3:00 pm

Register Here!

Virtual Regional Meetings

Northern (12/3), Southern (12/4), Central (12/5), & Bay (12/10)

Register Here!

Orientation for Non-Linkages Counties attending AB 135 Webinar

November 19, 2024 | 11:00 - 12:00 pm

Registration Flyer Coming Soon!

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



Danna Fabella

Linkages Program Director

danna.fabella@cfpic.org



Melissa Connelly

Associate Director

melissa.connelly@cfpic.org



Andrea Lewis

Linkages Program Associate

andrea.lewis@cfpic.org