



Linkages: Coordinated Case Planning

A Roadmap to Strengthening Families

Trainee Workbook

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Agenda

- Welcome & Introductions
- Brief history of Linkages and Linkages 2.0
- The Power of Partnership
- Local Implementation: Lessons Learned
- Action Plan
- Wrap-up & Evaluations

Learning Objectives

KNOWLEDGE

- K1 – Identify the benefits of collaboration between Child Welfare and CalWORKs in providing comprehensive support to vulnerable families.
- K2 – Identify legislation that pertains to Linkages and collaborative work between Child Welfare and CalWORKs.

SKILLS

- S1 – Identify and analyze the intersection points between CalWORKs and Child Welfare systems to enhance identification of families to improve coordination of services.
- S2 – Apply interdisciplinary collaboration steps in real-work scenarios, integrating planning and assessment processes to optimize outcomes for families.
- S3 – Develop an actionable plan for effective collaboration between Child Welfare and CalWORKs which identifies and addresses barriers to collaboration and includes steps to overcome such challenges.

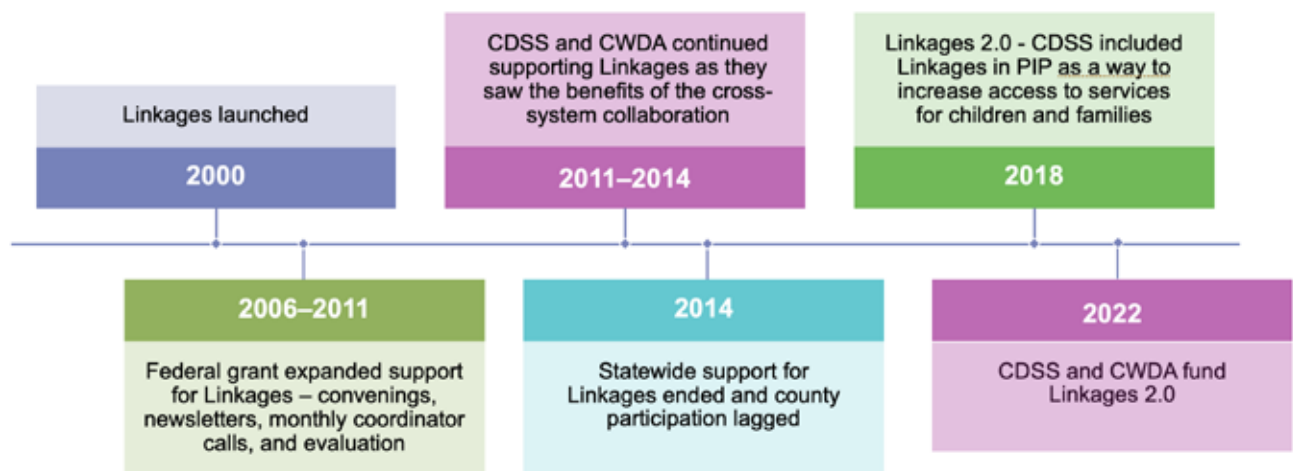
VALUES

- V1 – Appreciate the power of partnership in Coordinated Case Planning, fostering empathy, trust, and mutual respect between professionals and families.

Training Handouts

1. [CEBC Protective Factors Framework](#)
2. [Protective Factors: Resources and Tips](#)
3. [ACL 23-94](#) Regarding CalWORKs Changes to Family Reunification
4. [ACL 23-105](#) Regarding AB 2085 Clarification of Definition of “General Neglect”
5. [Core Practice Model Framework](#)
6. [5 Protective Factors](#)
7. [References](#)

Linkages Timeline



Background

Since 2000, California has championed the development of a transformative initiative known as Linkages. This philosophical approach represents a vital partnership between CalWORKs and Child Welfare agencies, driven by the shared mission to enhance the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families across the state.

- **Safety:** The Linkages approach aims to revolutionize the response to families involved with child welfare by ensuring timely assessments, identifying family strengths and needs, and implementing interventions that prioritize the safety of children.
- **Permanency:** Central to a Linkages approach is the unwavering commitment to achieving permanency for children. This entails providing comprehensive services and supports to keep children safely at home whenever possible, and when necessary, expediting legal permanency through reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship.
- **Well-being:** Embracing a holistic approach, Linkages recognizes the importance of promoting the overall well-being of children. This encompasses cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and social development, as well as physical health, ensuring that child welfare agencies are dedicated to nurturing every aspect of a child's growth and flourishing.

- **Lessons Learned:** Reflecting on the early iterations of Linkages, several key elements emerged as critical to its success. Strong leadership, fostering a workplace culture that values innovation, and establishing clear communication channels between CalWORKs and Child Welfare staff at all organizational levels were identified as pivotal factors. Moreover, external support from organizations such as the Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC) played a crucial role in providing technical guidance, training, and a platform for information-sharing and troubleshooting. By serving as a reliable “brain trust,” CFPIC ensured consistency in the implementation of the Linkages model, thus maximizing its effectiveness statewide.

Why Linkages?

Linking Poverty and Child Maltreatment:

Research underscores the profound impact of poverty and the likelihood of child maltreatment. Economic stressors create conditions where neglect, in particular, becomes prevalent, with over 60% of substantiated CPS responses nationally involving neglect alone. Neglect, a broad category encompassing various circumstances, often intersects with issues such as substance abuse and intimate partner violence, exacerbating the risk to children.

- **Understanding Neglect:** Neglect may encompass a spectrum of situations, from parental substance use to unstable living situations and food insecurity. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of neglect is essential in addressing the root causes, and providing targeted support to families.
- **Intersectionality of Issues:** Poverty intersects with other social determinants of well-being, amplifying the risk of child maltreatment. Linkages acknowledges the interconnectedness of economic, social, and health disparities, advocating for comprehensive interventions that address underlying systemic inequalities.

Linkages 2.0

Building on the foundation of Linkages, Linkages 2.0 represents a progressive evolution in the collaborative efforts between CalWORKs and Child Welfare. This renewed initiative is shaped by recent legislative developments, most notably the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), which has ushered in a new era of support and innovation in child welfare services.

FFPSA Support:

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) stands as a cornerstone of Linkages 2.0, empowering states and tribes to claim federal financial participation for a range of prevention services aimed at strengthening families and preventing children from entering foster care.

Notable provisions include:

- Funding for evidence-based Kinship Navigator programs to support relative caregivers in providing safe and stable homes for children.
- Enhanced requirements and oversight for youth placed in residential treatment programs, emphasizing quality and trauma-informed care.
- Access to family-based aftercare services for children transitioning out of Short-Term Residential Treatment Programs (STRTPs).
- Expanded services for older and transition-age youth, extending support to former foster youth up to age 23 and enhancing eligibility for the Education & Training Voucher (ETV) program.

CalWORKs 2.0 Integration:

Concurrently, CalWORKs has undergone its own transformation with the introduction of CalWORKs 2.0. This initiative shifts the focus from directive case management to customer-led case management, emphasizing flexibility and goal-oriented approaches. Key features of CalWORKs 2.0 include:

- Empowering individuals to set and achieve personalized goals aligned with program objectives.
- Recognizing and leveraging the strengths of families while addressing the challenges they encounter.
- Embracing a collaborative ethos that fosters partnership between clients and service providers in pursuit of holistic well-being.

CalWORKs 2.0 emphasizes a “whole family” approach, focusing on the needs of both parents and children to promote self-sufficiency and economic stability. CalWORKs 2.0 is goal achievement oriented and driven by tools developed to identify and support unique family needs.

CalWORKs 2.0 adopts a trauma-informed, holistic approach that promotes family stabilization through addressing the needs of the entire family unit, recognizing that the well-being of parents and children are interconnected.

- Family Centered Services
- Child Well-Being
- Supportive Services
- Case Management and Coaching

Linkages: What Does It Look Like?

Linkages operates through the synergy of CalWORKs and Child Welfare staff, leveraging their combined expertise to address the complex needs of shared families. By bridging economic assistance and social services, Linkages ensures a holistic approach to family support.

Co-location

A key feature of Linkages is the physical co-location of CalWORKs and Child Welfare staff. This intentional placement within each other's offices fosters seamless communication and collaboration. Co-location eliminates barriers to information sharing and enhances the efficiency of service delivery. Moreover, it cultivates a reciprocal environment where both agencies work closely to meet the diverse needs of families.

- **Benefits of Co-location:** Co-location not only facilitates direct communication but also promotes a deeper understanding of each agency's role and resources. It enables staff to develop personal relationships, fostering trust and collaboration.
- **Flexible Workspace Design:** Considerations for the physical layout of co-located offices should prioritize flexibility and accessibility. Design elements such as shared meeting spaces and integrated technology can enhance collaboration and productivity.

Cross-Training Between Staff

Linkages fosters a culture of mutual learning and understanding through cross-training initiatives. Staff members from Child Welfare and CalWORKs/WTW have the opportunity to immerse themselves in each other's roles, responsibilities, and available services. This cross-pollination of knowledge enhances collaboration and ensures a more holistic approach to addressing family needs.

- **Building Bridges:** Cross-training not only enhances professional development but also strengthens relationships between staff from different programs. It fosters a shared understanding of common goals and challenges, laying the foundation for effective teamwork and communication.

- **Skill Enhancement:** Cross-training equips staff with a broader skill set, enabling them to provide more comprehensive support to families. By gaining insights into diverse perspectives and approaches, professionals can tailor interventions to meet the unique needs of each family.

Collaborative Client Engagement

Linkages places a strong emphasis on collaborative client engagement, ensuring that families feel heard, valued, and respected throughout their interactions with both programs. Staff from Child Welfare and CalWORKs work together to cultivate a supportive and inclusive environment for families.

- **Strength-Based Approach:** Collaborative client engagement embraces a strengths-based perspective, recognizing the resilience and capabilities of families. By focusing on assets rather than deficits, Linkages empowers families to overcome challenges and achieve positive outcomes.
- **Culturally Responsive Practices:** Collaborative client engagement encompasses cultural competence and sensitivity, acknowledging the unique needs and experiences of diverse populations. Linkages promotes inclusive practices that honor the cultural identity and preferences of families, fostering trust and rapport.

Coordinated Case Planning

Central to Linkages is coordinated case planning, where CalWORKs and Child Welfare staff convene regularly to discuss shared cases. These meetings serve as platforms for aligning services and developing comprehensive plans to address family needs effectively.

- **Strengths-Based Approach:** Coordinated case planning emphasizes a strengths-based perspective, recognizing the assets and capabilities of families. By leveraging existing resources and building upon strengths, Linkages promotes sustainable solutions and empowerment.
- **Family-Centered Approach:** Coordinated case plans prioritize the voices and preferences of families, empowering them to actively participate in decision-making. By fostering a collaborative partnership between families and professionals, Linkages promotes accountability and ownership in the intervention process.
- **Integrated Service Delivery:** Coordinated case plans streamline access to services, reducing fragmentation and duplication of efforts. Through seamless coordination, families receive a continuum of care that addresses their multidimensional needs effectively.

Integration of Services

Linkages integrates CalWORKs/WTW with Child Welfare as core components, recognizing their complementary roles in supporting families. This integration amplifies the impact of services, addressing both economic and social determinants of well-being.

- **Wraparound Services:** The integration of CalWORKs and Child Welfare enables the provision of wraparound services tailored to the unique needs of each family. By addressing multiple dimensions of poverty and adversity, Linkages maximizes the effectiveness of interventions.
- **Cross-Training Initiatives:** Cross-training initiatives facilitate mutual understanding and collaboration among staff from different agencies. Training sessions on each other's programs and protocols enhance cross-agency communication and service coordination.

Sharing of Resources and Addressing Critical Needs

Linkages facilitates the sharing of resources between CalWORKs and Child Welfare programs, enriching the array of support available to families. From financial assistance to specialized services, this collaborative approach ensures that families receive comprehensive and tailored support.

Linkages confronts critical issues such as domestic violence, substance abuse, mental health, parenting, transportation, and childcare. CalWORKs plays a vital role in providing financial assistance to families, supporting access to essential services and resources.

Collaborative Approach

Throughout these stages, CWS professionals, including social workers, case managers, and support staff, collaborate closely with families, courts, and community partners.

Collective efforts are directed towards ensuring the safety and well-being of children, facilitating family reunification when possible, and promoting positive outcomes for children and families alike.

Levels of Intervention

Primary/Prevention Strategies

- Target Population: All Applicants of CalWORKs not involved in CWS to provide support and education before problems occur.
- Linkages Activity: Provide information and materials to promote child and family wellbeing.

Early Intervention/Secondary Prevention Strategies

- Target population: Applicants for/recipients of CalWORKs with identified risk factors/service needs who may/may not have been referred to CWS, but CWS case has not been opened.
- Families in need of support to alleviate identified problems and prevent escalation.
- (Hotline/ER/Family Stabilization/Home visiting/Differential Response)
- Linkages Activity: Align and coordinate early intervention services and supports.

Mutual Client Coordination/Tertiary Prevention Strategies

- Target Population: Families who are open to CalWORKs and CWS. (Family Maintenance, Family Reunification)
- Linkages Activity: Provide interventions for children experiencing maltreatment. Coordinate joint services, supports and resources to prevent re-entry to CWS and alleviate economic stressors.

Supporting Families In Crisis – Evaluating Strengths And Needs

Appreciating the Complexity: Family systems are intricate webs woven with intergenerational dynamics, cultural influences, and socio-economic factors, each shaping the family’s journey uniquely.

Acknowledging Trauma and Adversity: Recognizing the profound impact of trauma on family resilience underscores the importance of trauma-informed approaches in supporting families during times of crisis.

Assessment Tools

Equipping practitioners with assessment tools sensitive to cultural nuances ensures a comprehensive understanding of family strengths and needs, fostering trust and engagement.

Assessments encompass physical and mental health, housing stability, financial resources, and social support networks, illuminating the multifaceted needs of families.

Common Assessments Used in CalWORKs and Child Welfare

Safety Organized Practice (SOP) in child welfare is an approach that prioritizes the safety and well-being of children and families involved in the child welfare system. It focuses on collaborative and strengths-based strategies to enhance child safety while respecting family needs. SOP requires that we conduct a rigorous and balanced assessment with the family – it is not something we do “to” the family. Through the use of techniques that facilitate family engagement, we are better able to not only identify family strengths but also to utilize those strengths and natural supports to mitigate risk and enhance safety.

SOP focuses on:

- Cultural humility
- Solution-focused questions
- The Three Questions: What’s working well? What are we worried about? What needs to happen?

- Safety Mapping – Visual process in which the CW agency provides clear and specific statements identifying the harm that the child has suffered as the result of the parents’ behavior; and what danger that behavior, if unmitigated, creates for the child.
- Trauma-Informed techniques

Child Welfare Structured Decision Making (SDM) is a suite of research-based assessment tools that are designed to assist child welfare staff at critical decision points throughout the life of a child abuse/neglect case.

Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) is a multi-purpose tool that supports decision-making, including level of care and service planning, which allows for the monitoring and outcome of services. When used as part of the CFT process, as California is doing, the CANS Assessment can help guide conversations among CFT members about the well-being of children and youth, identify their strengths and needs, inform and support care coordination, aid in case planning activities, and inform decisions about placement.

Online CalWORKs Appraisal Tool (OCAT) is a web-based interview tool designed to equip CalWORKs caseworkers with an in-depth appraisal of client strengths and barriers to self-sufficiency. The tool gathers and provides information about the client on a variety of topics, including employment and educational history, housing stability, physical and behavioral health, and domestic abuse, in order to assist caseworkers in developing effective welfare-to-work plans.

[ACL 15-69: Questions And Answers Regarding The CalWORKs WTW Program Appraisal And The OCAT](#)

CalWORKS Key Components

CalWORKs, short for California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids, serves as California's iteration of the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. At its core, CalWORKs is designed to offer temporary financial assistance and employment support to low-income families with children, fostering their journey towards stability and self-sufficiency.

- Cash Assistance
 - Eligibility Criteria
- Welfare to Work (WTW)
- Family Stabilization

Through these key components, CalWORKs endeavors to address the immediate needs of vulnerable families while equipping them with the resources and support necessary to achieve long-term economic security and well-being. By promoting employment, stability, and family empowerment, CalWORKs plays a vital role in fostering resilience and opportunity for California's most vulnerable populations.

Child Welfare Services (CWS) Key Components

Child Welfare Services (CWS) constitute a comprehensive framework of programs and initiatives dedicated to safeguarding children, supporting families, and fostering positive outcomes across various stages of intervention.

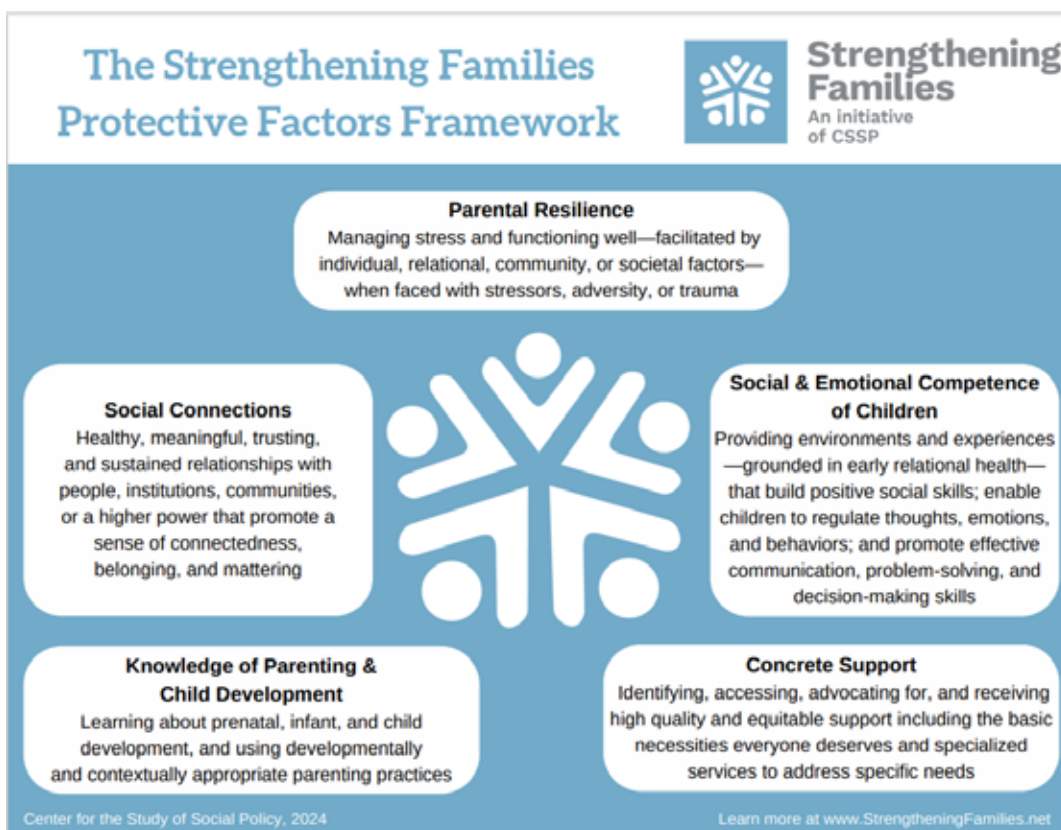
- Emergency Response (ER)
- Family Reunification (FR)
- Family Maintenance (FM)
- Permanency Planning (PP)

Strengthening Families / The 5 Protective Factors

The Strengthening Families initiative is an approach that identifies specific factors that support child and family well-being. While child welfare assessments have historically focused on identifying risk factors for children and focusing interventions on reducing or eliminating those risk factors, current practice seeks to develop a more comprehensive includes identifying family strengths. This shift to a more comprehensive and strengths-based approach aims to better support families while ensuring the safety and well-being of children.

It recognizes that many families have the potential for positive change and that children often benefit from maintaining strong connections with their families whenever possible. This approach also aligns with the Core Practice Model and Cal-Works 2.0 practice models.

- Parental Resilience
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children
- Concrete Support
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Social Connections



Equity and Inclusion

Children of color, and specifically Black and Native American children, continue to experience disparities at every stage of the child welfare system: maltreatment reports, investigations, case substantiations, service referrals, out-of-home placements, family reunification, termination of parental rights, and time spent in foster care. In California, black children are three times more likely to be the subject of allegations of abuse and neglect, and almost 5-1/2 times more likely to end up in care. Native American children experience similar disproportionality – they are 2.5 times more likely to be the subject of allegations and 4.6 times more likely to end up in care.

While there are lots of reasons for these disparities, Linkages multi-tiered focus on prevention seeks to support families before they are the subject of a referral. Then, if they become involved in child welfare, by combining the resources of both agencies, by listening to what the family wants/needs and including that in our planning efforts, the hope is that we can support a timely, safe and permanent exit from child welfare.

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement in Linkages

Evaluation serves as the compass guiding our collaborative journey between CalWORKs and Child Welfare agencies. By systematically assessing outcomes and soliciting feedback, we ensure that Linkages 2.0 remains effective and responsive to the needs of vulnerable families in crisis.

- Monitoring Outcomes
- Feedback Mechanisms
- Data Collection Methods
- Continuous Improvement Strategies
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Timeline for Evaluation
- Next Steps

Vignette Activity – Collaboration in Action

Scenario

The Smith family, Mom, Dad, and two children ages 4 and 7, became involved with Child Welfare due to child neglect concerns as the children were left unsupervised for an extended period of time.

Background

The family is receiving CalWORKs as Dad recently lost his job, and Mom works part-time as a hotel receptionist. They are having difficulty paying rent and household expenses. Mom is struggling with depression, and the stress of their situation has caused some tension with Mom and Dad's relationship. Mom and Dad lack access to support systems such as family, neighbors, and community who could provide assistance with childcare. With limited resources, the parents have been unable to afford childcare. This leads to situations where the children are left unsupervised while Dad seeks employment and Mom goes to work.

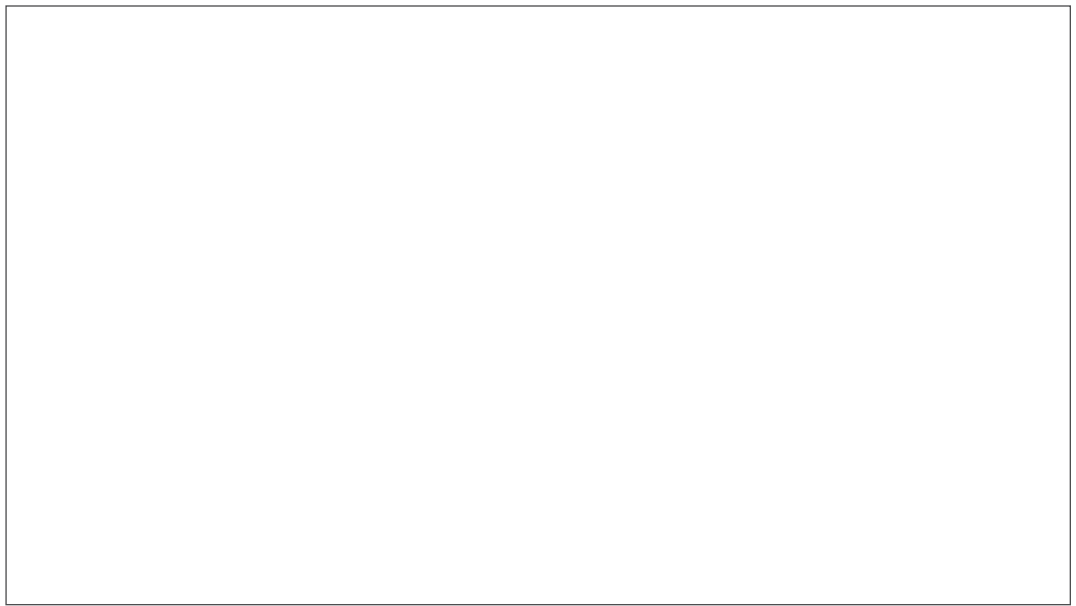
Child Welfare Services Involvement

A concerned neighbor made a report that the children had been unsupervised in the home for extended periods of time. She was also concerned they did not have food, as they knocked on her door to ask for something to eat.

The children were removed after the responding Social Worker found the children home alone, and the allegations of neglect were substantiated.

Mom and Dad have an active Child Welfare Family Reunification case and will benefit from a Linkages approach, as they were active with CalWORKs at the time of detention.

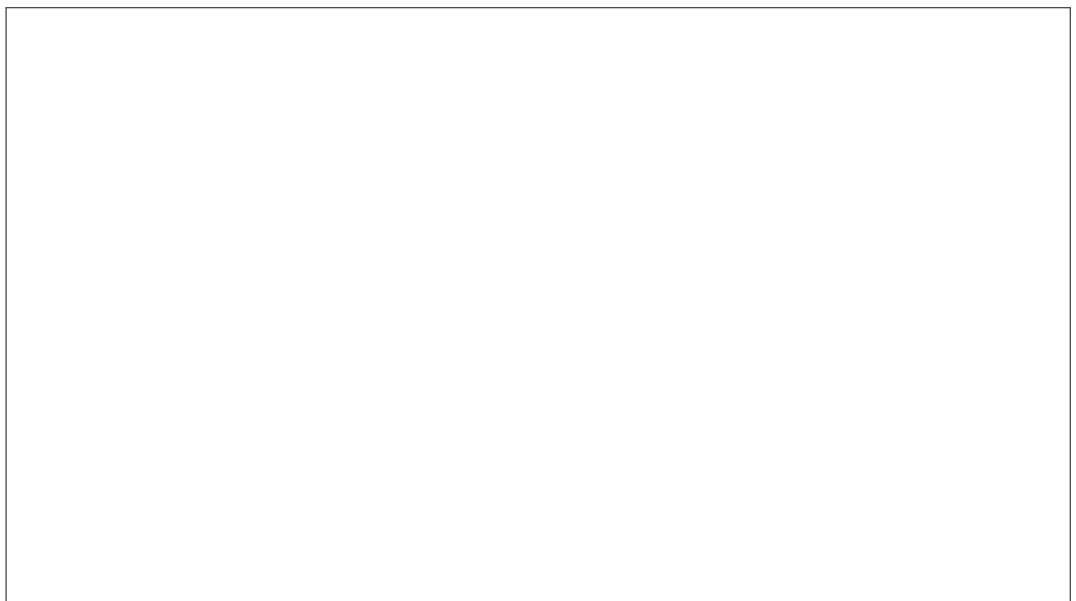
- How might CalWORKs and CWS team to support this family?
- What services might be helpful and how will these services enhance the parental protective factors and child safety?



Child Welfare Services (CWS) Involvement

CWS conducted a comprehensive assessment and recognized the overlapping needs of the Smith family, including housing instability and lack of childcare, which could be offered by CalWORKs. The social worker initiated a referral to CalWORKs highlighting the family's situation and potential CalWORKs needs. The referral was communicated to the CalWORKs case manager, who promptly reached out to the social worker to discuss the family's case and explore opportunities for collaboration.

- How does a Linkages approach support this family?
- Are there similar situations in your county where this approach has worked or may work well?



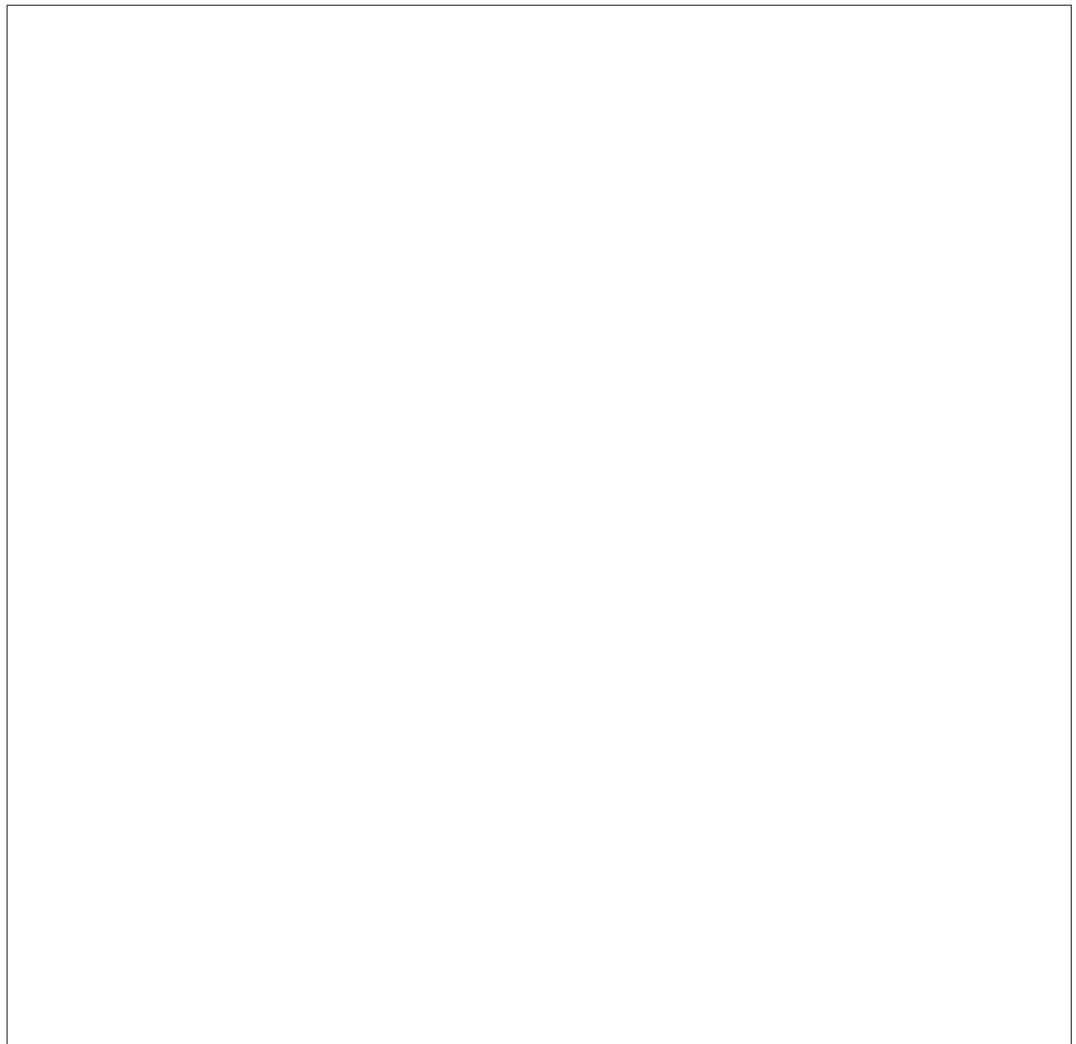
CalWORKs Support

CalWORKs was able to provide immediate rental assistance to prevent eviction and ensure housing stability. Mom and Dad were offered employment support services including resume assistance, job search resources, referrals to potential employers, and childcare to assist during job search/work.

Teaming for Supportive Services

The CWS social worker identified that the family is both active with CalWORKs and CWS involvement.

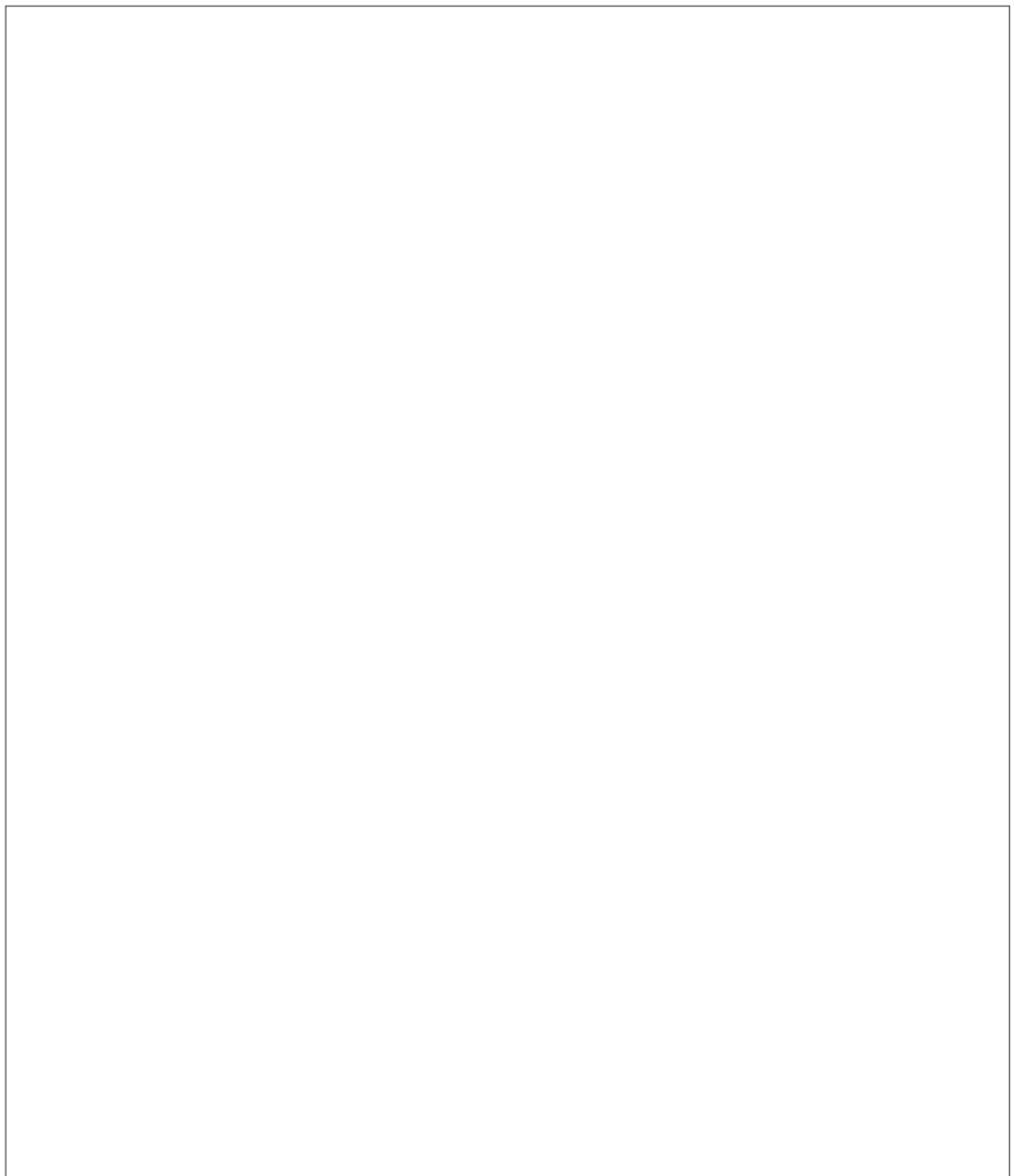
- How could CalWORKs and Child Welfare support the family collaboratively?
- What would they be doing to facilitate communication and the coordination of services?
- What would CalWORKs need from Child Welfare?
- What would Child Welfare need from CalWORKs?



Collaborative Approach

Both CalWORKs and CWS collaborated closely to coordinate services and support for the Smith family. Joint meetings were held to discuss the family's case, share information, and develop a comprehensive service plan tailored to the family's unique needs, strengths, and circumstances. By leveraging the skills and strengths of both CWS & CalWORKs and the resources of both agencies, the family received integrated support that addressed their immediate needs and promoted their long-term stability.

- How does/could Linkages work in your county?
- What do you need to support you with collaboration between Child Welfare and CalWORKs in your county?





Linkages In Action

Linkages is an approach, a way of practice. It allows us to leverage resources and align case plan goals and services to collaboratively support families. Take a moment to write down a few thoughts from today and what you plan to do in your work to support a collaborative approach. What do you need from the child welfare social worker/WTW case manager on a case where there is a mutual family to successfully collaborate?