



Linkages: CALWORKs and ER

Strengthening Families Through Collaboration

Trainee Workbook



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Agenda

- Introductions/Group Agreements
- Review of Materials
- CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services (CWS)
- Linking CalWORKs and Child Welfare during Emergency Response (ER)
- Strategies for Collaboration
- Supporting Families in Crisis
- Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Learning Objectives

1. Define CalWORKs and CWS roles in Linkages 2.0 during ER
2. Appreciate the importance and benefits of coordinating CalWORKs and CWS during ER
3. Identify key intersection points of CalWORKs and CWS in the ER process
4. Apply effective communication and collaboration strategies to facilitate coordination between CalWORKs and CWS
5. Evaluate family strengths and needs and agency resources to provide timely and coordinated assistance during crises
6. Develop strategies for monitoring outcomes and improving collaboration efforts

Overview of Linkages

Key Legislation

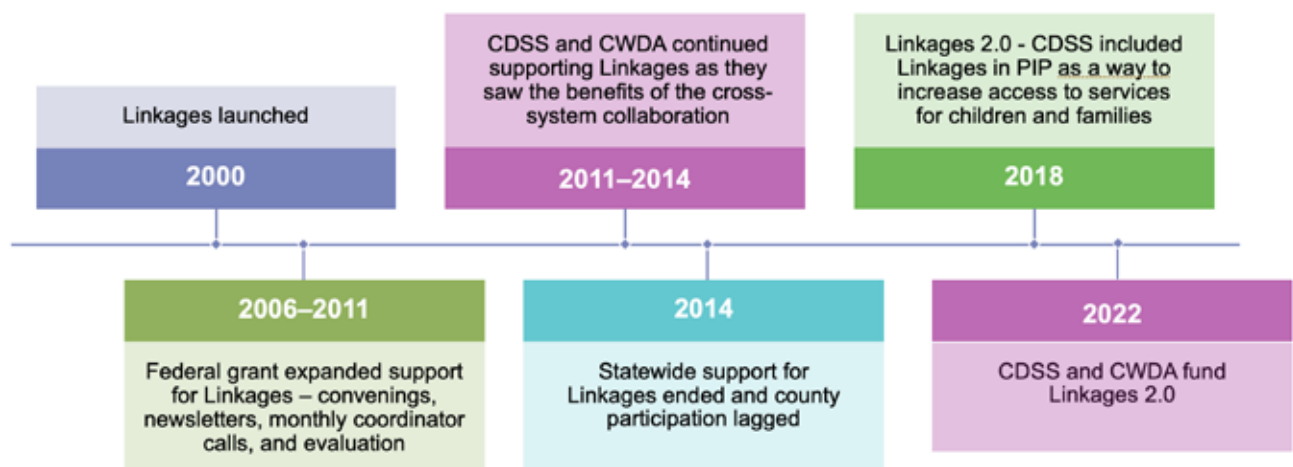
AB 429: Allows continuation of CalWORKs services for the parent or parents of children who have been removed from the home. If the county determines that services are necessary for Family Reunification (FR), AB 429 provisions allow the parent(s) to receive CalWORKs Welfare- to-Work (WTW) Supportive Services (i.e., WTW plan), substance use disorder, and behavioral health services, if it is determined that such services are necessary for family reunification.

AB 135: Authorizes the provision of cash aid and childcare services to families participating in CalWORKs Family Reunification (FR) as part of their reunification plan for up to six months.

AB 2085: Passed in 2023- Revised the definition of general neglect under Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) in California, clarifying that a child must be “at substantial risk of suffering serious physical harm or illness” to fall within the definition of ‘general neglect’ and that this cannot be simply due to a parent’s economic disadvantage.

SB 1085: California state bill that aims to redefine neglect in the context of child welfare. This bill seeks to protect vulnerable families by ensuring that conditions such as a partially empty refrigerator or temporary inability to afford childcare won’t alone result in child removal. It emphasizes that poverty and lack of resources should not be grounds for separating families.

Linkages Timeline



Why Linkages?

Linking Poverty and Child Maltreatment

Research underscores the profound impact of poverty on 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 encompasses a spectrum of situations, from parental substance use to homelessness 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 Logic Model

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.

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.

Strengthening Families / Protective Factors

Parental resilience

Parents who can cope with the stresses of everyday life, as well as an occasional crisis, have resilience. Multiple life stressors, such as a family history of abuse or neglect, health problems, marital conflict, or domestic or community violence—and financial stressors, such as unemployment, poverty, and homelessness—may reduce a parent’s capacity to cope effectively with the typical day-to-day stresses of raising children.

- Example: Mom is a newly single parent and expects her seasonal employment to end next month. She knows this will be a challenge and has reached out to her CalWORKs worker for support with job placement and interview skills.

Social connections

Parents and caregivers with a social network of emotionally supportive friends, family, and neighbors often find that it is easier to care for their children and themselves compared with those who do not have such a network. Research has shown that parents who are isolated and have few social connections are at higher risk for maltreating their children.

- Example: Parents of a child with special needs are connected to a play group and make connections with other parents who are caring for a child with special needs. This helps broaden their support network.

Knowledge of parenting and child development

Children thrive when parents provide not only affection but also respectful communication and listening, consistent rules and expectations, and safe opportunities that promote independence.

- Example: A Social Worker helps Dad learn to respond in a positive way when his child misbehaves – instead of yelling at his child, he learns to help the child regulate their emotions by having them practice taking slow, deep breaths.

Concrete supports in times of need

Partnering with parents to identify and access resources in the community may help prevent the stress that sometimes precipitates child maltreatment. Providing concrete supports may also help prevent the unintended neglect that sometimes occurs when parents are unable to provide for their children.

- Example: The family reaches out about a 48-hour shut off notice for their utilities. The Social worker connects the family with the Low-Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to get help paying their overdue bill; this prevents the family's lights from being shut off.

Social and emotional competence of children

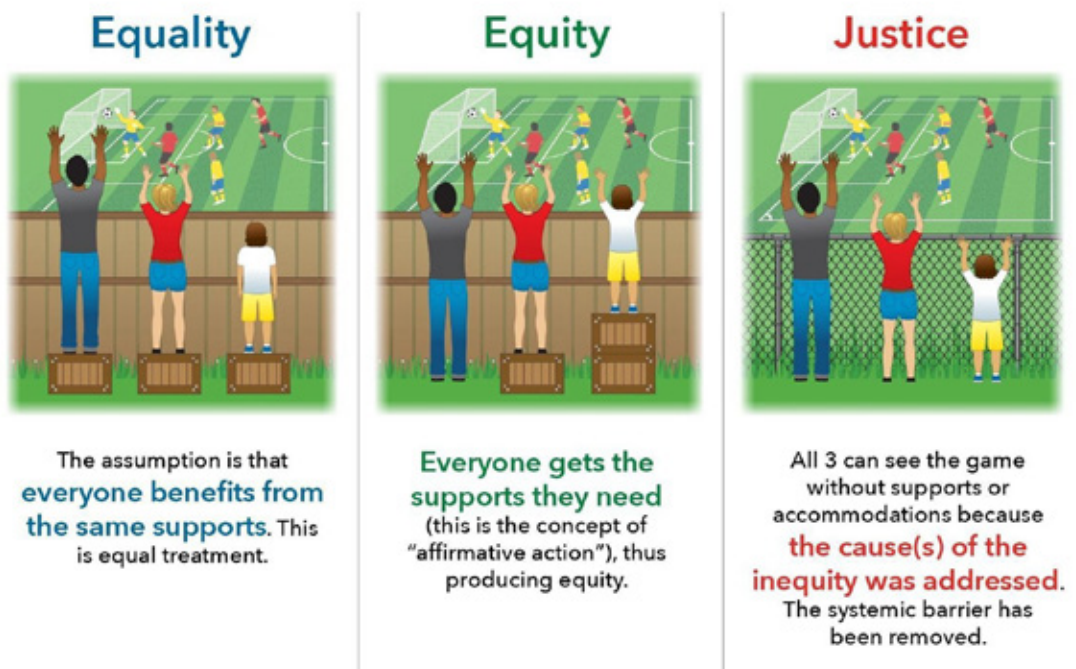
Parents support healthy social and emotional development in children when they model how to express and communicate emotions effectively, self-regulate, and make friends. A child's social and emotional competence is crucial to sound relationships with family, adults, and peers. Conversely, delayed social-emotional development may obstruct healthy relationships. Early identification of such delays and early assistance for children and parents can provide support for family relationships and sustain positive and appropriate development.

- Example: Mom and Dad create a regular family check-in routine with their children to talk about their day.

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.



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)

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.

CalWORKs 2.0

CalWORKs 2.0 emphasizes prevention through 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 holistic approach by 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

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.

Integration of CalWORKs and CWS within CPM – How We Do It

Within each of the principles and components of CPM are a set of practice behaviors. These behaviors are designed to guide practitioners in their interactions with families.

- **Engagement** – Listening, lifting up families’ voice and choice
- **Inquiry and Exploration** – Asking families about other family members, cultural identity, their worries and hopes for the future
- **Advocacy** – Identifying and connecting families with services and supports that meet their needs while modeling for families how to advocate for themselves
- **Teaming** – Connecting with family members, informal supports, and facilitating partnerships with agencies to mitigate safety and risk while promoting development of protective factors

- **Accountability** – Through data collection, qualitative case reviews and real time feedback, evaluate progress towards established system goals
- **Workforce Development and Support** – Providing the necessary training, coaching and workload support to our staff to promote professional development

When we consider where Linkages fits in the CPM model, we focus on teaming and service delivery. When agencies come to the table at the very beginning of a CW investigation, we have the opportunity to quickly identify safety and risk factors, while also identifying family strengths and community resources that can support families who are struggling.

Linking CalWORKs and CWS During ER: Strengthening Support During Crisis

Why Coordination Matters

In the tumult of a crisis, families facing economic hardships may find themselves entangled in the web of both CWS and CalWORKs. The intersection of these services is not just a bureaucratic overlap—it's a lifeline for families navigating the storm of adversity.

Coordination between CalWORKs and Child Welfare agencies ensures swift and seamless access to vital support services. By joining forces, we can cut through red tape and deliver assistance promptly, sparing families unnecessary delays and frustrations.

By pooling resources and expertise from both systems, we can adopt a more holistic approach to crisis intervention. Addressing economic instability alongside child welfare issues enables us to craft more nuanced and effective solutions tailored to each family's unique circumstances.

Benefits of Collaboration

Coordinating CalWORKs and Child Welfare services offers families a one-stop shop for a comprehensive array of support services. From financial aid to housing assistance, childcare services to counseling, families can access a broad spectrum of resources without navigating multiple bureaucratic hurdles.

Collaboration empowers professionals to conduct thorough assessments of family needs, considering both economic challenges and child welfare considerations. This comprehensive approach lays the groundwork for targeted and impactful intervention plans that address the root causes of crises.

Research underscores the transformative power of integrated services. Families receiving coordinated support not only experience greater stability and reunification but also exhibit enhanced long-term self-sufficiency—a testament to the profound impact of collaboration on shaping brighter futures.

Strategies for Collaboration: Enhancing Coordination and Communication

Establishing Effective Communication Channels

Regular Meetings: Foster collaboration by scheduling periodic meetings between CalWORKs and Child Welfare teams. These gatherings provide opportunities to discuss shared cases, exchange information, and identify collaboration opportunities based on the urgency and complexity of cases.

Communication Platforms: Utilize a variety of communication channels, including phone calls, emails, and secure messaging platforms, to facilitate timely exchange of information. Establish clear protocols for communication to ensure confidentiality and regulatory compliance.

Designated Liaison Personnel: Appoint dedicated staff members from both agencies as liaison personnel. These individuals play a pivotal role in facilitating communication, resolving conflicts, and addressing challenges encountered during the collaboration process.

Cross-Training and Professional Development

Cross-Training Opportunities: Enhance mutual understanding and collaboration through tailored training sessions and workshops. Topics may range from agency mandates to trauma-informed care and cultural competency, fostering a more cohesive and empathetic approach to service delivery.

Shadowing and Mentorship Programs: Implement shadowing and mentorship initiatives where staff from CalWORKs and Child Welfare can learn from each other's experiences. This hands-on approach promotes empathy and teamwork across disciplines, enriching the collaborative process.

Joint Training Workshops: Organize joint training workshops or seminars to address relevant topics such as effective case management and crisis intervention techniques. These sessions bring together staff from both agencies, fostering a culture of shared learning and best practice dissemination.

Intersection Points: Identifying Common CalWORKs and Child Welfare Families in Linkages during ER

In the ER phase, effective coordination between CalWORKs and CWS is paramount. Here, we delve into the methods and strategies for identifying and supporting families facing crisis situations who intersect with both CalWORKs and CWS services.

Cross-Referencing of Families: Due to the lack of system integration between CalWORKs' CalSAWS and CWS databases, counties must employ alternative methods for identifying Families receiving assistance from both programs.

- **Manual Cross-Referencing:** County workers can manually cross-reference families' information by accessing separate CalSAWS and CWS databases and comparing records. A referral process is often established at the ER level, facilitating review of eligibility for Linkages.
- **Alternative Data Systems:** Utilizing tools like Excel or similar software, counties merge and cross-reference family data to identify families benefiting from both CalWORKs and CWS support.

Assessments: Comprehensive assessments during the ER phase enable early identification of families in need of both CalWORKs and CWS assistance.

Targeted questions to consider:

- **Household composition:** Are any family members receiving CalWORKs? Are there current or past involvements with CWS?
- **Financial stability:** Is anyone participating in Welfare to Work? Are financial challenges impacting the household?
- **Safety concerns:** Are there housing or domestic violence issues? Have there been child welfare reports or concerns?

Collaborative Referral Systems: Establishing collaborative referral systems between CalWORKs and CWS departments expedites access to services for mutual families.

- **Shared Referral Platform:** Implementation of an online platform accessible to both departments allows for seamless referral submission and tracking. Features may include secure messaging and real-time updates on referral status.
- **Designated Liaison:** Appointing liaisons within each department facilitates communication and coordination, ensuring timely and appropriate referrals.

- **Referral Tracking and Follow-up:** Implementing a system to track referrals from initiation to resolution, with follow-up to ensure families receive necessary support, enhances accountability and family outcomes.

Joint Case Staffing and Case Planning

- **Scheduled Staffings:** Establish a routine for joint case staffings where representatives from CalWORKs, Child Welfare, and other stakeholders convene to review complex cases and develop comprehensive plans. Prioritize family voices and preferences while ensuring their safety and well-being remains paramount.
- **Integrated Case Documentation:** Implement an integrated case management system that facilitates seamless documentation and information sharing between CalWORKs and Child Welfare agencies. Uphold privacy and security standards while promoting transparency and collaboration among stakeholders.
- **Family-Centered Approach:** Embrace a family-centered approach during case conferencing and planning sessions. Empower families to actively participate in decision-making processes, fostering open dialogue and constructive feedback to build trust and rapport.

Practice: Sarah's Story

Sarah, a 32-year-old single mother, resides in a low-income neighborhood with her three children: Emma (age 10), Jack (age 8), and Lily (age 5). Sarah has a history of substance abuse but has been actively engaged in a recovery program for the past six months. Recently, Sarah lost her job at a local grocery store due to attendance issues related to her ongoing recovery efforts. Emma has been frequently absent from school and often stays home to care for her younger siblings when Sarah is unable to do so due to work or other commitments. Upon the initial CWS home visit, the social worker identified that Sarah's home presents safety hazards, such as exposed electrical outlets and unsecured cleaning supplies.

The agency's CalWORKs and CWS departments currently operate independently, with limited communication and coordination between them. There is not currently a policy for the sharing of information between CalWORKs and CWS.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the immediate concerns for Sarah and her children?
2. How can CalWORKs and CWS collaborate to address Sarah's needs and ensure the safety and well-being of her children?
3. What are the potential barriers to collaboration between CalWORKs and CWS, and how can they be overcome?

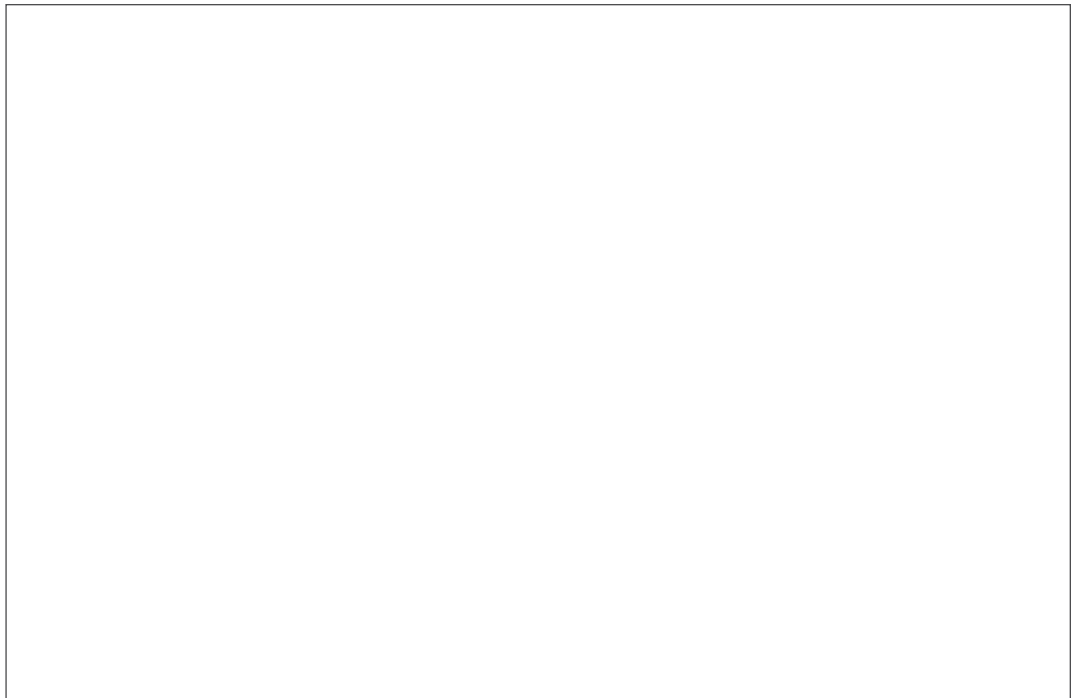
Analysis & Recommendations



A Plan to Commit

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.

1. How will you monitor your Linkages program and work toward continuous improvement in your county?
2. What methods will you use to collect data and how will you know the program is working?



Moving Forward and Next Steps

1. What steps do you commit to take to promote collaboration in Linkages in your county at the prevention/early intervention level? What support will you need to accomplish this?
2. How do you envision these efforts positively impacting families in need?

