



Linkages Overview

Empowering Families through Partnership

Trainee Workbook

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Agenda

- Introductions/Group Agreements
- Materials/Resources Overview
- Program Overview
- Collaborative Partnerships
- Services and Eligibility
- Case Management and Coordination
- Family Engagement Guidelines
- Questions and Discussion

Learning Objectives

KNOWLEDGE

- K1 – Describe the purpose of the Linkages program and its role in strengthening families and preventing child maltreatment.
- K2 – Identify the intersections of requirements between CalWORKs and Child Welfare and explain how to navigate overlapping mandates to streamline service delivery.

VALUES

- V1 – Recognize the importance of collaboration and partnership in serving shared families and demonstrate a willingness to engage in cooperative efforts.

SKILLS

- S1 – Develop strategies to overcome historic barriers to effective collaboration between Child Welfare and CalWORKs.
- S2 – Demonstrate the ability to apply family-centered practices in case management and coordination efforts.

Overview of Linkages

Key Legislation

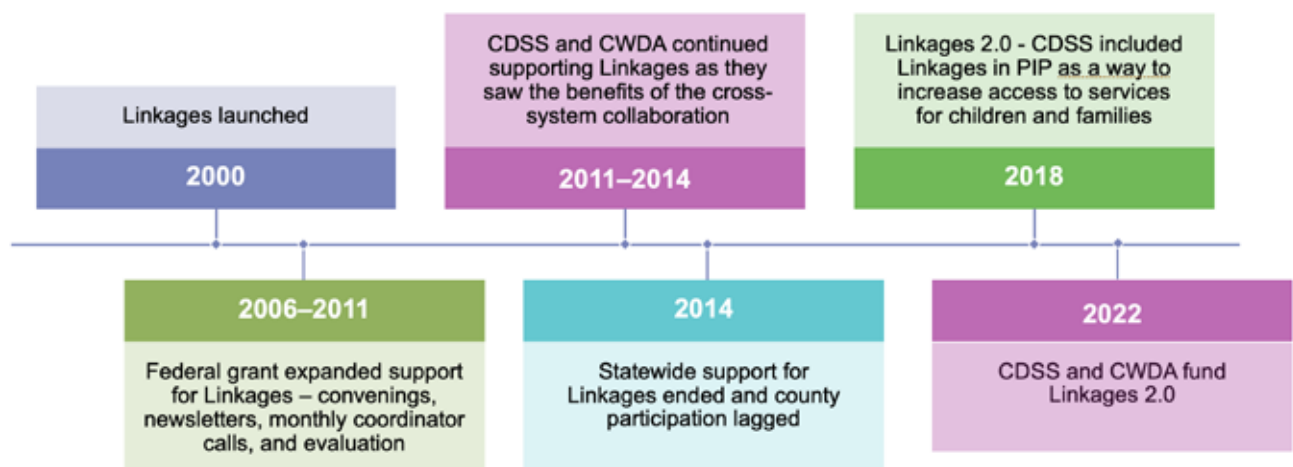
AB 429: Allows continuation of CalWORKs services for the parent or parents of children who have been removed from the home. If the county determines that services are necessary for Family Reunification (FR), AB 429 provisions allow the parent(s) to receive CalWORKs Welfare- to-Work (WTW) Supportive Services (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



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.

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.

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.



Strengthening Families / Protective Factors

1. Parental resilience
2. Social Connections
3. Knowledge of parenting and child development
4. Concrete support in times of need
5. Social and emotional competence of children

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.

Key Components of Linkages Practice

Co-location

Physical co-location of CalWORKs and Child Welfare staff is pivotal to effective collaboration. 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.

Coordinated Case Planning

Coordinated case planning is a central component of Linkages practice, with CalWORKs and Child Welfare staff convening 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.

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, allowing agencies to team up to reach common goals with the families they serve.

Linkages: What does it look like in action?

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.

Coordinated Case Planning

At the heart of Linkages is the alignment of case plans. These plans are the culmination of collective efforts by both Child Welfare and CalWORKs staff, ensuring that the family's needs are comprehensively addressed, and services are aligned. Coordinated case planning promotes synergy and alignment across services, maximizing the impact of interventions.

- **Family-Centered Approach:** Coordinated case planning prioritizes 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 planning streamlines access to services, reducing fragmentation and duplication of efforts. Through seamless coordination, families receive a continuum of care that addresses their multidimensional needs effectively.

Collaborative Family Engagement

Linkages places a strong emphasis on collaborative family 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 family 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 family 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.

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.

Who is being served?

- Families served by Child Welfare and CalWORKs/WTW
- Categories of services:
 - Emergency Response Referrals
 - Family Maintenance (Family Preservation)
 - Family Reunification
 - After-Care

Family Engagement Guidelines

Family engagement guidelines serve as the cornerstone of Linkages, fostering meaningful connections between families and the services they receive. By prioritizing family engagement, Linkages empowers families to become partners in the intervention process, driving positive outcomes and fostering lasting change.

Active family engagement is not merely a procedural requirement; it is a fundamental principle that underpins the success of Linkages. When families are engaged, they become active participants in their own case plans, contributing valuable insights, perspectives, and strengths to the intervention process. This collaborative approach promotes a sense of ownership and accountability, laying the groundwork for sustainable change.

Empowering Families

- Active family engagement empowers families to take ownership of their journey towards positive change. By fostering a sense of agency and self-efficacy, Linkages promotes resilience and self-advocacy among families, empowering them to overcome challenges and achieve their goals.

Cultural Responsiveness

- Effective family engagement requires a culturally responsive approach that acknowledges and respects the unique values, beliefs, and preferences of each family. Linkages promotes inclusive practices that honor diversity and promote equity, ensuring that all families feel valued and respected.

Evidence-Based Practice

- Research consistently demonstrates the link between active family engagement and positive outcomes across various domains, including child well-being, family stability, and long-term success. Linkages incorporates evidence-based strategies and approaches to maximize the impact of family engagement efforts.

Long-Term Benefits

- The benefits of active family engagement extend beyond immediate outcomes, shaping the trajectory of families' lives for years to come. By fostering strong relationships, promoting self-sufficiency, and building resilience, Linkages lays the foundation for lasting change and generational impact.

Integrated Approach

- Family engagement is woven into the fabric of Linkages, shaping the design, implementation, and evaluation of interventions. By integrating family engagement principles into every aspect of service delivery, Linkages creates a culture of collaboration, partnership, and shared responsibility.



Training Activities

Alphabet Soup Activity

In your small group, with Child Welfare and CalWORKs staff, fill in the table with the meaning of the following common acronyms. The answer key is on the next page.

SDM	
CWS/CMS	
AU	
OCAT	
CANS	
Sanction	
TANF	
WTW	
MAP	
TPR	
CFTM	
FS	
ESE	
TAY	
WIC	
HSP	
OPM	
SUD	

SDM	Structured Decision Making
CWS/CMS	Child Welfare Services Case Management System
AU	Assistance Unit
OCAT	On-Line Cal-WORKS Appraisal Tool
CANS	Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths
Sanction	When a nonexempt recipient is removed from the assistance unit (AU) for failing or refusing, without good cause, to comply with WTW participation requirements.
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
WTW	Welfare to Work
MAP	Maximum Aid Payment
TPR	Termination of Parental Rights
CFTM	Child and Family Team Meeting
FS	Family Stabilization
ESE	Expanded Subsidized Employment
WIC	Welfare and Institutions Code
HSP	Housing Support Program
OPM	Official Poverty Measure
SUD	Substance Use Disorder

Vignette Activity: The Miller Family

The Miller family, an African American family made up of Mrs. Miller, the mother, Mr. Miller, the father, and two children, ages 1 and 3 years old, are facing significant challenges. The father recently lost his job due to a DUI incident that affected his ability to drive. As a result, the family's financial situation deteriorated rapidly. Their home lacks electricity, and they struggle to provide adequate food for their two medically fragile children. The living conditions are also unsanitary, prompting a report of severe neglect.

In addition, the mother grapples with ongoing mental health challenges. A report alleging severe neglect is received and requires emergency response to the home. The report is substantiated and the children are removed from the home for their safety. Both parents are actively engaged with CalWORKs, and a Family Reunification case plan is now in place to support their reunification efforts.

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you see CWS and CalWORKs connecting to provide a Linkages approach to supporting this family?
2. How might disproportionality factors play into their situation?
3. What are the benefits of teaming?
4. Identify potential challenges in teaming efforts. For instance, communication gaps, differing priorities, or resource limitations. How might these challenges impact the Miller family's case? Brainstorm strategies to overcome these obstacles, such as regular cross-agency meetings, shared training, and joint case reviews.



Plan to Commit

1. How do you plan to strengthen collaboration between CWS and CalWORKs within your role, ultimately enhancing support for shared families?
2. What challenges might you encounter in your county?
What are some ways those challenges can be overcome?