

Statewide Convening 2026



LINKAGES^{2.0}

Building Bridges for Families.

**Bridging Gaps:
Lessons
Learned from
Our Screening
Tool Pilot**



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Screening Tool Background

- The Linkages Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Committee works to identify ways Linkages strategies can support upstream prevention work with families
- The Committee identified public benefits applicants as a population who might be interested in family strengthening services, but may be unsure of what resources exist
- The Committee is focused on building access to community-based prevention services that can help families build resiliency

Why Screen For Service Needs?

Many CalWORKs applicants are ineligible for Welfare-to-Work services, but they face challenges that put them at risk of child welfare involvement. Communities need streamlined ways to connect this underserved population with prevention services in community pathways.

Tool Purpose

- Identify family strengths and needs early in the family's journey
- Provide appropriate referrals to community-based support services

- Identify Strengths and Needs
- Support Prevention Efforts
- Facilitate Service Coordination
- Promote Equity and Accessibility
- Enhance Outcomes for Families
- Streamline Decision Making
- Increase Autonomy
- Inform System Improvements

Screening Tool Goals

Key Elements of the Tool



Core Components

- Needs Assessment
- Alignment with Prevention Efforts
- Customizable with County Resources



Accessibility Features

- Self Service and Staff Assisted Modes
- Language Accessibility Framework
- Inclusivity and Cultural Responsiveness



Usability and Design

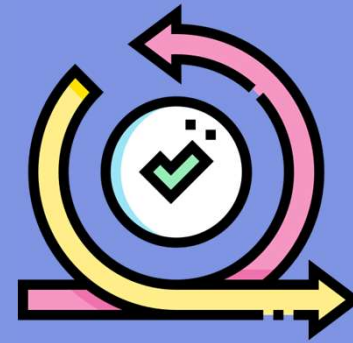
- Intuitive Navigation
- Privacy and Security
- Interactive Features

Key Elements of the Tool



Integration and Reporting

- Streamlining Data Collection
- Customizable Reporting



Feedback and Iteration

- User Feedback Mechanism
- Scalability and Updates

Tool Development Process

Landscape Scan

- Scan Needs Assessment Surveys across the nation
- None fit CA's specific needs
- Looking to adapt components

Constituent Engagement

- Engage Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Linkages Committee
- Workgroup of 3 counties- small/medium/large (information gathering)
- Develop statewide survey
- Focus groups/key informant interviews

Develop Screening Tool & Implementation Strategy

- Leveraging information gathered from constituent feedback, draft an example screening tool
- Develop a guide for counties on how to customize and implement screening tool

Overview of Screening Tool

21 Questions

Section 1: Living Situation

Section 2: Financial & Employment Stability

Section 3: Education & Child Well-Being

Section 4: Family Challenges

Section 1: Living Situation

Includes questions pertaining to:

- **Housing Needs**
- **Household composition**
- **Pregnancy**
- **Caregiver Status**

Section 2: Financial & Employment Stability

Includes questions pertaining to:

- **Financial Supports Received**
- **Concrete Support Needs**
- **Employment Status (Self & Partner)**
- **Employment Challenges**

Section 3: Education & Child Well- Being

Includes questions pertaining to:

- **Education Access & Support**
- **Parenting Stressors**
- **Child School Status & Hardships**
- **Other Child Well-Being Factors**

Section 4: Family Challenges

Includes questions pertaining to:

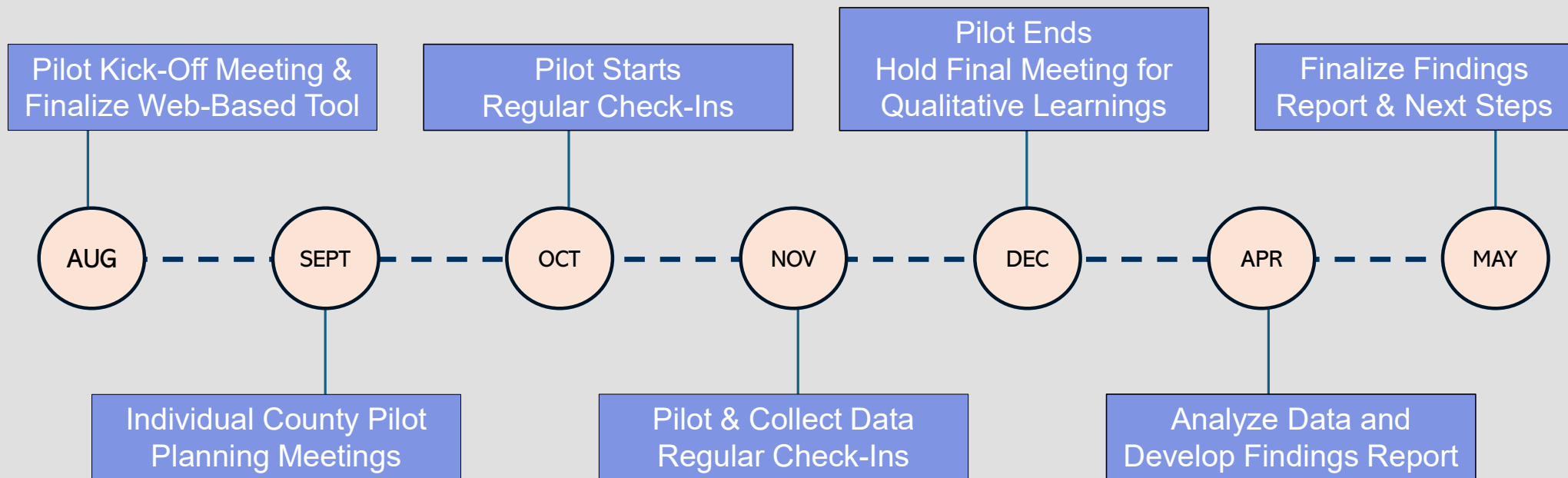
- **System Involvement** (for program eligibility)
- **Safe Relationships**
- **Alcohol and/or Drug Use**
- **Mental Health Needs**
- **Accessing Support & Social Support**

Questions about the Tool

- Select Pilot Counties
- Training and Orientation
- Test User Experience
- Assess Language Needs
- Evaluate Outcomes
- Perform Refinements

Piloting Process

Pilot Completed with 2 Counties



- Delivery
- Cultural responsiveness
- Warm handoffs
- Program eligibility
- Training
- Continuous Quality Improvement
- System integration
- Accessibility

Pilot Implementation Considerations

Pilot Successes

- In both counties, the greatest value of the tool was the immediate delivery of relevant resources
- Families responded positively once they understood the tool's purpose and saw tangible benefits
- Staff preparation, scripting, and consistent messaging improved engagement
- The tool also reinforced prevention-oriented conversations and highlighted existing community strengths

Pilot Challenges

- Time pressure affected participation in both counties, whether through early opt-out or partial completion
- Confusion about whether the tool was mandatory impacted participation in different ways
- Platform limitations created challenges for data access, follow-up, and tracking, requiring staff workarounds
- Both counties raised concerns about how to manage large resource lists without overwhelming families.

Pilot Lessons Learned

- The tool works best when positioned as a voluntary, supportive resource rather than an additional requirement
- Immediate access to resources is more motivating than completing a full questionnaire
- Follow-up processes must be designed into the tool flow to minimize staff burden
- Counties benefit from models that are adaptable to staffing realities, physical space, and community needs

- The tool helped normalize prevention-oriented conversations and reinforced awareness of resources
- Some families declined to participate because they were focused solely on CalWORKs or believed the screening was mandatory
- Staff felt there was duplication with intake questions and had workload concerns
- Early completion at first contact improves reach but requires clear voluntary framing and realistic workload planning
- Resource lists should be scalable and adaptable to geography and population needs to remain effective.

Pilot Results: Napa

- Outreach increased participation and helped normalize the tool as a supportive resource
- Time constraints were the most common reason for non-completion
- Plan for multiple participation modes (assisted, self-administered, QR/take-home, and paper)
- Build privacy considerations into lobby-based workflows
- Collect warm handoff consent and contact information earlier in the process
- Provide intern/staff coaching and scripts focused on refusals, reasons for early exit, and ensuring follow-up options are clear

Pilot Results: Placer

- Identify if families were able to access the resource provided and if the resources provided met their needs.
- Identify any families that would like to participate in a follow up survey and/or focus group regarding the process

Post-Pilot Goals

**Let's
Discuss!**

**Table Talk
Activity**

Discussion Questions:

- Where in your county's current CalWORKs applicant or intake process could this screening tool naturally fit?
- What aspects of the screening tool feel most useful and what could be clearer or improved?
- How could this tool strengthen coordination between CalWORKs, child welfare prevention, and community-based organizations in your county?
- What is one concrete next step your county could take in the next 3–6 months to explore or pilot this tool?

Report Out:

- One question about the tool
- One suggested improvement to the tool
- One idea for how your county might use the tool

Report Out

- **One question about the tool**
- **One suggested improvement to the tool**
- **One idea for how your county might use the tool**

Interested in testing the Screening Tool in your county?

Contact Andrea Lewis (andrea.lewis@cfpic.org)

