



2026 CFPIC Linkages Convening

Family Reunification Policy Lab

April 29, 2026



Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Family Reunification (FR) Overview and Examples
3. All County Letter Process
4. Inter-County Transfer Process for CalWORKs FR families
5. Restoration Rules for CalWORKs FR families
6. Welfare to Work Reminders for FR Services
7. Family Reunification Best Practices/Reminders
8. What's on the Horizon for CalWORKs FR
9. Q&A session
10. Closing

Introductions: Presenters



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Family Reunification CalWORKs Eligibility

Laying the Foundation for Parents to Thrive



CalWORKs Family Reunification Policy Changes (Assembly Bill 135)

AB 135 (Chapter 85, Statutes of 2021):



Amended Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) Section 11203



Allows families receiving CalWORKs to **continue receiving cash aid and child care services** if their children are placed into foster care, when the county determines these services are necessary for reunification



Increases the temporary absence period from 180 consecutive days up to 6 months.

Eligibility for CalWORKs FR Services and Cash Assistance

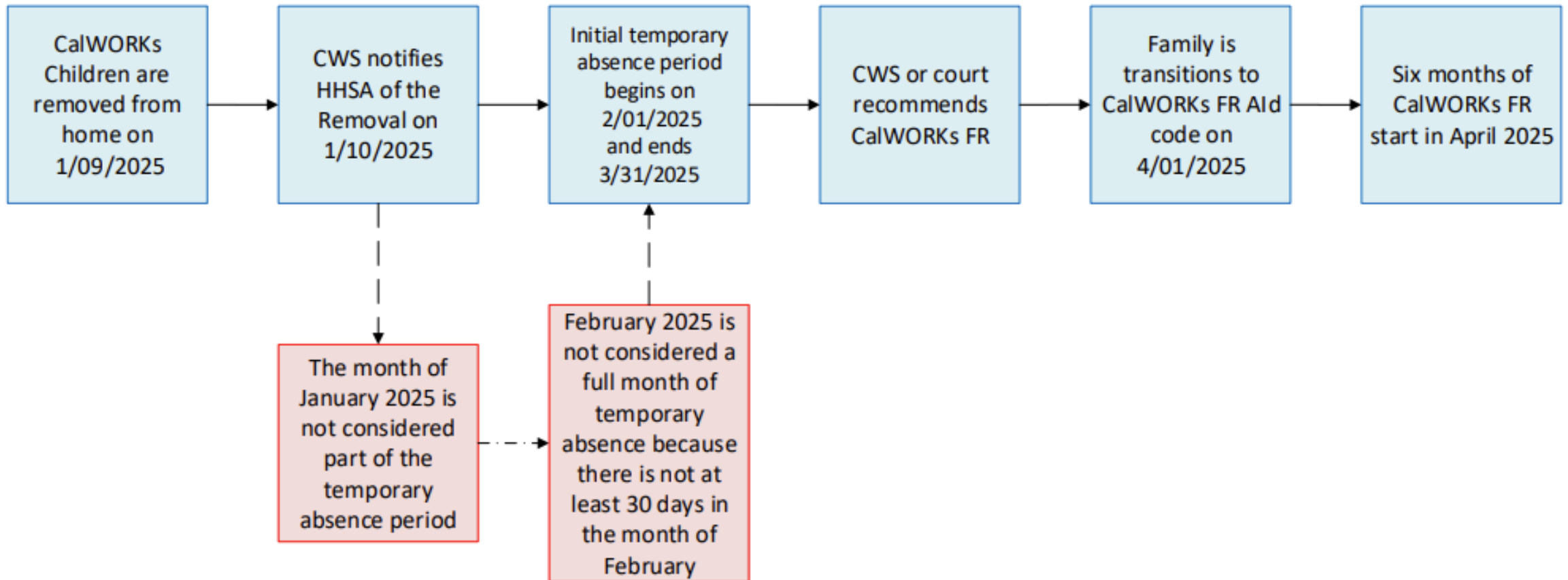
- All CalWORKs-eligible children were removed from the home and temporarily placed in out-of-home care by the Child Welfare Services (CWS) agency.
- The family was receiving CalWORKs cash aid when the child(ren) was removed.
- CWS or a court has determined that the provision of cash aid, child care, and/or reunification services is necessary for reunification, and a reunification plan is in development and/or in effect.



CalWORKs FR Process and Collaboration with CWS

1. The CWS agency or sometimes the parent will report that the CalWORKs children were removed from the home and placed in out of home care. (As a reminder, County Health and Human Services Agencies (HHSAs) must not discontinue the family before the temporary absence period has ended).
2. Once the CWS worker determines that the family receives CalWORKs assistance, a timely determination for FR services, cash assistance, child care must be recommended in order for the family to continue to remain eligible for CalWORKs.
3. Once recommended, the family will begin to receive FR services and child care and the six full months of cash assistance will begin once the temporary absence period has ended.
4. It is imperative that the CWS agencies and County HHSAs remain in close communication to avoid CalWORKs discontinuances.

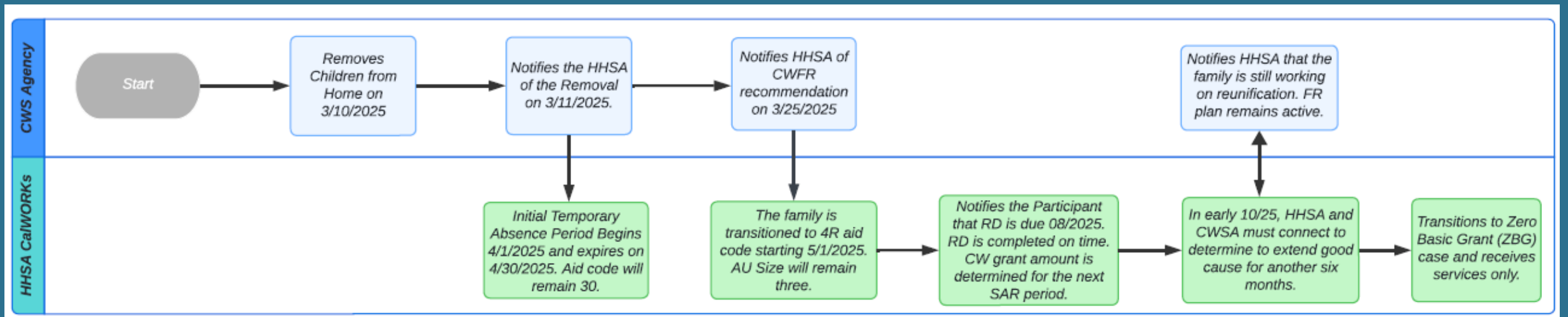
Initial Temporary Absence Period - Example



Process Map for CalWORKs FR Cash Aid

Scenario Information

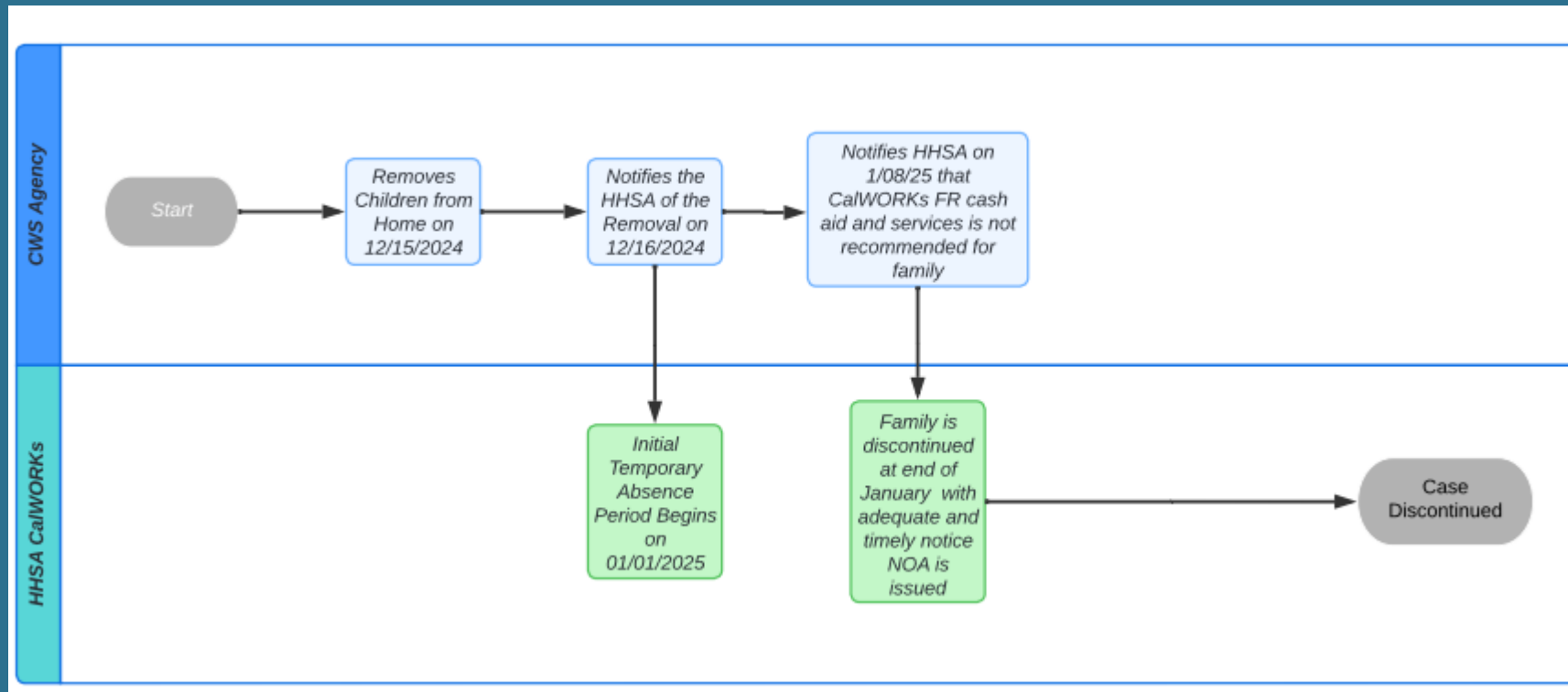
- CW Family Composition: 3 individuals (1 Parent + 2 Children)
- Current Aid Code: 30
- Redetermination Due: August 2025



Process Map for CalWORKs FR Cash Aid

Scenario Information

- CW Family Composition: 3 individuals (1 Parent + 2 Children)
- CWS notifies the County HHSA that reunification is not possible for the family.



All County Letter (ACL) Process and FR

The purpose of ACLs are to:

- Provide new policy guidance or regulatory changes
- Correct and update existing regulations
- Give counties guidelines and procedures on how to implement to ensure consistency across the state
- Provide clarity for complex regulations

All County Letter (ACL) Process and FR

The California Department of Social Services released 4 ACLs to support the implementation of AB 135.

ACL 23-94: The implementation of the bill and covered the changes being made to family reunification that included the provisions of cash assistance for a full six months and child care.

ACL 24-48: Introduced our revised FR forms and notice of action messages county use.

ACL 25-05: Addressed frequently asked questions related to Family Reunification and CalWORKs eligibility.

ACL- 25-09: Provides CWS case plan documentation requirements for AB 135 for families receiving CalWORKs.

Inter-County Transfers (ICT) for CalWORKs FR Families

An ICT occurs when a family moves from one county to another. FR families follow the same ICT rules as regular CalWORKs families.

FR parents must report if they intend to reside in another county within 10 days of the actual move.

In some situations, parents may need to seek resources outside of their county of residence; it is important to know all of the details before initiating the ICT to ensure a transfer is not premature.

Group Activity: ICT or No ICT

Group Activity: ICT or No ICT

Scenario #1

Household Composition: 1 parent, 2 children living in Sacramento County.

The children were removed from the home on 1/01/2026.

The CWS agency recommends FR services, cash assistance and child care for the parent on 1/15/2026.

3/2026, the parent reports that they will be starting rehab in Placer county for 3 months but plans to come back to Sacramento County once completed.

ICT or NO ICT?

Group Activity: ICT or No ICT

Answer:

NO ICT

Reason:

The parent intends to return to Sacramento county once their treatment is complete. The parent is allowed to be in Placer county temporarily if they intend to return.

Group Activity: ICT or No ICT

Scenario 2:

Household Composition: 2 parents, 3 children living in Stanislaus County.

The children were removed from the home on 2/15/2026.

The CWS agency recommends FR services, cash assistance and child care for the parent on 3/01/2026.

In May, the parents report that they will be staying in Tulare county temporarily since they have family support there. In August, the parents go into Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency and report they are now living in Tulare county. It is a better option for them and will help them with reunification with their children. One of the parents also will be starting work in Tulare County soon.

ICT or NO ICT? If ICT, when?

Group Activity: ICT or No ICT

Answer:

ICT (August)

Reason:

The parents have been in Tulare county since May 2026, however they intended to reside in Stanislaus County until the move to Tulare was reported in August. Since the family requested the ICT in Tulare, Tulare will start the process for ICT.

Group Activity: ICT or No ICT

Scenario #3

Household Composition: 1 parent, 1 child living in San Joaquin County

The child was removed from the home on 4/01/2026

The CWS agency recommends FR services, cash assistance, childcare on 5/20/2026.

In June, the parent shares with the CWS worker that they are experiencing homelessness and are couch surfing with friends in Yolo county but hope to return to San Joaquin when they find a place to live. In October, the participant goes into the Sacramento County Department of Human Services to get a new EBT card and tells the County HHSA that they are living in transitional housing located in Sacramento County.

ICT OR NO ICT? If ICT, where and when?

Interactive Activity: ICT or No ICT

Answer:

ICT (October/Sacramento County)

Reason:

The participant has moved and established residency in Sacramento county after couch surfing in Yolo County for a few months. ICT should be initiated by Sacramento County so San Joaquin County can send all relevant case information to the new county of residency.

ICT Best Practices for FR Families

Sending and receiving counties and CWS agencies will need to work together to ensure that the CWS case plan remains consistently active to facilitate the family's smooth transition to the new county of residence.

Sending county should ensure that the receiving county is accurately informed of the number of months that a family has been on FR. FR timeframes do not start over when a case is transferred to a new county.

Document all details of the ICT in the CalSAWS journal to ensure that another worker and/or county will have all of the details needed to successfully complete the process.

If an FR family applies in another county, the HHSA in the new county is responsible for retrieving the FR details from the previous county to ensure that the parent is in compliance with the CWS case plan.

Restoration of Assistance and FR

- Restoration of assistance is allowable for FR families.
- If the family is discontinued less than 30 days after the temporary absence period, the discontinuance can be rescinded.
- If restoration is sought 30 days after the temporary absence period, the family may need to go back through the intake process again per county process and CalSAWS automation.
- If the family must go back through the intake process, County HHSAs are strongly encouraged to complete the intake promptly to avoid any further delays in assistance.
- As a reminder, prorated months do not count as a full month of cash assistance for FR families.

Family Reunification & Welfare to Work

Meeting the Moment for CalWORKs Families



Using the CWS FR or Linkages Case Plan

- Families will not be subject to WTW non-compliance rules or risk financial sanctions.
- Minimizes conflicting requirements between WTW, child welfare, and families.
- Recognizes that balancing work, training, and responsibilities is challenging.

Aligning WTW Activities with CWS Plans

- Integrate CWS plan activities into the WTW plan
 - Substance use treatment
 - Mental health services
 - Parenting classes
- FR policy allows CWS activities to count toward WTW participation

Good Cause

- FR participants qualify for good cause
- Being an FR family puts participants in a circumstance outside of their control
 - Per MPP 42-713.1, “A recipient shall be excused from participation in welfare-to-work activities for good cause in accordance with Section 42-713.2, when the CWD determines there is a condition or other circumstance that temporarily prevents, or significantly impairs, the individual's ability to be regularly employed or to participate in welfare-to-work activities.”

Best Practice for Curing Sanctions

- Align WTW plan with CWS reunification case plan activities to avoid duplication requirements
- Use a supportive, trauma-informed approach that recognizes the stress of child removal and court involvement
- Provide supportive services immediately
- Remove barriers to participation

Best Practice for Curing Sanctions

- Document participation in reunification activities as meeting WTW requirements
- Ensure timely restoration of aid
- Prioritize engagement over enforcement - avoid unnecessary or repeat sanctioning in FR cases

New Sanction Rule (7/1/2026) ACL 26-28

- Effective 7/1/26 (or upon automation if needed), a participant can cure a sanction simply by stating, verbally or in writing, that they want to participate in WTW
 - Participants can call, write, or message through BenefitsCal
- No longer requires completing a full curing activity before aid is restored
- The CalWORKs grant will go back to the amount that includes the previously sanctioned person(s) effective the following month

Family Reunification Best Practices

- CWS agencies must share the case plan with the CalWORKs worker as soon as possible to ensure timely transition to CalWORKs FR cash aid and services.
- Assess family strengths, needs and goals regarding services needed while receiving CalWORKs FR and identify barriers that may prevent reunification.
- Coordinate case plans, including services and resources, with CWS partners to reduce stress and eliminate contradicting plans and goals.
- Evaluate families for good cause to remove penalties and sanctions, if applicable
- Review the parent's time on aid clock for exceptions before denying or discontinuing CalWORKs FR and services
- Partner with CDSS for technical assistance and resources.
- Partner with CFPIC (Linkages) for implementation resources.

What's on the Horizon for Family Reunification in 2026/2027

- Assembly Bill 2510 is currently in the legislative process.
- FR technical assistance meetings will reconvene in 8/2026 and 11/2026.
- FR FAQ Part Two will be published in 2027.
- CFSD All County Information Notice will be published in 2026.
- CDSS will begin to pull data for FR families to assess impacts thus far.
- Continued partnership with our CFPIC partners.

QUESTIONS?



Thank you

