



CalWORKs Outcomes & Accountability Review System Improvement Plan (Cal-SIP)

July 2021- June 2026

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

EMPLOYMENT & HUMAN SERVICES



CalWORKs County System Improvement Plan (Cal-SIP) Report

County: Contra Costa

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Executive Summary

1. Please summarize the performance measures selected for improvement.

The performance measures the County Welfare Department (CWD) will focus on during the first Cal-OAR cycle are increasing the OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate, reducing the Sanction Rate, and increasing the First Activity Attendance Rate. Please refer to the responses in the Measure and Goal Narrative for additional information.

2. Please provide a comprehensive list of improvement strategies identified within the Cal-SIP.

Goal 1: Increase OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate to 21% from 17%.

The CWD seeks to improve performance by implementing the following four strategies to increase the OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate:

Strategy 1: Improve timeliness of referring eligible participants to WTW upon CalWORKs approval.

Action Steps:

- Through training and policy issuances, reinforce the requirement to refer CalWORKs approved cases with Stage 1 childcare to WTW the same day approved and expand requirement to all WTW eligible participants.
- Support the operational business process that exempt WTW participants are to be referred to WTW to monitor exemption through ongoing training and policy reminders.
- At the initial eligibility determination to add an adult to an ongoing CalWORKs case, the CalWORKs worker will refer the individual to WTW as appropriate.

Strategy 2: Schedule participant's WTW OCAT/Appraisal in a timelier manner.

Action Steps:

- Expand outreach efforts that educate participants about the WTW program, available supportive services, and incentives. During the outreach, staff will offer the customer various options for OCAT/Appraisal appointment times.
- Utilize operational reports to monitor WTW referrals and OCAT/Appraisal scheduling dates.
- Through training and policy issuances, reiterate the required timeframes for scheduling WTW OCAT/Appraisal upon CalWORKs approval.

Strategy 3: Reinforce policy for staff through internal Staff Development training and issuance of policy documents.

Action Steps:

- Through refresher trainings and policy issuances, remind staff of the operational referral process from CalWORKs to WTW.
- Conduct ongoing monitoring to review referral timeliness compliance.
- Incorporate Welfare-to-Work policy in CalWORKs training provided by Staff Development.

Strategy 4: Evaluate subpopulation data to identify disparities and/or gaps as it relates to the timely delivery of the OCAT/Appraisal.

Action Steps:

- Review and analyze disaggregated data provided by CDSS and other available sources to determine if and which subpopulation of the CalWORKs/Welfare to Work program is underserved.
- Conduct root cause analysis, including partner and collaborator engagement to determine the root cause of disparities/gaps in the following areas, but not limited to service delivery, policies, and business processes.
- Develop strategies and actions steps that aim to close the gaps on disparity findings.
- Include strategies, action steps, and any other pertinent information in Progress Report #1 due on 02/21/2025.

Goal 2: Decrease Sanction Rate to 11% from 13%.

The CWD seeks to improve performance by implementing the following four strategies to decrease the Sanction Rate:

Strategy 1: Cure sanction at time of CalWORKs application.

Action Steps:

- At CalWORKs Intake and redetermination, WTW staff will coordinate curing the WTW sanction at CalWORKs interview.
- The WTW worker and participant will review and complete the WTW curing sanction forms (WTW 29 and WTW 2).
- During the curing sanction process, the WTW worker will conduct WTW orientation and OCAT/Appraisal with the participant.
- During every CalWORKs intake and redetermination, CalWORKs staff will explain the benefits of participating in WTW, available supportive services, Stage 1 Child Care, etc.
- At CalWORKs approval, the assigned CalWORKs worker will cure the WTW sanction and begin aiding previously sanctioned participant.

Strategy 2: Provide additional flexibility when participants are unable to engage in WTW activity before initiating WTW sanction.

Action Steps:

- WTW Workers will be assigned a monthly targeted number of WTW sanctioned participants to contact for WTW reengagement.
- Establish a participant text message campaign to cure sanctions.
- Increase participant education re: WTW supportive services, childcare, support when attending school, etc.
- Remind staff through policy issuances to utilize all available resources for sanctioned participants.
- Reinstate home visits / outreach by ES/SW for WTW participants to assist in curing sanctions.

Strategy 3: Reinforce policy for staff through internal Staff Development training and issuance of policy documents.

Action Steps:

- Provide staff training to reinforce strategies on reengagement and the WTW curing sanction process.
- Publish All Staff communications, other materials, and videos to educate staff

Strategy 4: Evaluate subpopulation data to identify disparities and/or gaps as it relates to sanctioning WTW participants.

Action Steps:

- Review and analyze disaggregated data provided by CDSS and other available sources to determine if and which subpopulation of the CalWORKs/Welfare to Work program is sanctioned at a higher rate compared to overall.
- Conduct root cause analysis, including partner and collaborator engagement to determine the root cause of disparities/gaps in the following areas, but not limited to service delivery, policies, and business processes.
- Develop strategies and actions steps that aim to close the gaps on disparity findings.
- Include strategies, action steps, and any other pertinent information in Progress Report #1 due on 02/21/2025.

Goal 3: Increase First Activity Attendance Rate to 64% from 62%.

The CWD seeks to improve performance by implementing the following three strategies to increase the First Activity Attendance Rate:

Strategy 1: Increase outreach to educate participants about scheduled appointments with their WTW worker and activity attendance.

Action Steps:

- Establish text messages to remind participants of appointments and start of activities.
- Implement a process for staff to conduct a check-in call with participants prior to start of their activity to answer any questions and remind them of supportive services and childcare.

Strategy 2: Provide more upfront transportation & other supportive services to support participant activity engagement.

Action Steps:

- Upon assignment of case, contact participant by telephone to encourage WTW activity attendance and discuss transportation, Stage 1 Child Care, and other available supportive services.
- Ensure participant has necessary resources to select Stage 1 Child Care provider through referrals to our local Resource and Referral Agency.
- Increase marketing of available incentives & continue to issue incentives based on activity enrollment & participation.

Strategy 3: Evaluate subpopulation data to identify disparities and/or gaps as it relates to first activity attendance.

Action Steps:

- Review and analyze disaggregated data provided by CDSS and other available sources to determine if and which subpopulation of the CalWORKs/Welfare to Work program is underserved.
- Conduct root cause analysis, including partner and collaborator engagement to determine the root cause of disparities/gaps in the following areas, but not limited to service delivery, policies, and business processes.
- Develop strategies and actions steps that aim to close the gaps on disparity findings.
- Include strategies, action steps, and any other pertinent information in Progress Report #1 due on 02/21/2025.

Introduction

The CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review (Cal-OAR) is a local, data-driven program management system that facilitates continuous improvement of county CalWORKs programs by collecting, analyzing, and disseminating outcomes and best practices. As required by Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 11523, Cal-OAR consists of three core components: performance indicators, a county CalWORKs self-assessment (Cal-CSA), and a CalWORKs system improvement plan (Cal-SIP).

The Cal-OAR continuous quality improvement (Cal-CQI) process (which includes the Cal-CSA and Cal-SIP) takes place over five-year cycles. The first Cal-OAR cycle commenced on July 1, 2021, with the implementation of Cal-OAR. The Cal-SIP is the second component of the Cal-OAR CQI process. The Cal-SIP is based on the information gathered and reported from the Cal-CSA, wherein each CWD will develop a plan for improving their CalWORKs program. The Cal-SIP will select a measure or set of measures for focused improvements and development to improve the selected performance measures while pairing each Cal-SIP goal with an equity goal and/ or strategy.

1. Describe your approach to the Cal-SIP Report.

Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD) County Welfare Department (CWD) hereinafter referred to as CWD, established a core Cal-OAR team whose members include the Work Participation Rate (WPR) Program Analyst, CalWORKs Program Analyst, Welfare-to-Work Childcare Program Analyst and two Workforce Services Specialists who convened to discuss preliminary planning and the approach of completing the CalWORKs System Improvement Plan (Cal-SIP). The core CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review (Cal-OAR) team attended all Mathematica led Cal-SIP trainings and coaching sessions and met regularly with the assigned County Department of Social Services (CDSS) Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Specialist when clarification on Cal-SIP questions was necessary. The Cal-OAR team's Workforce Services Specialist served as the Cal-OAR Team Lead and ensured compliance with internal and CDSS submission deadlines. The core Cal-OAR team convened regular in-person and virtual meetings with program staff to discuss Cal-OAR and gather feedback for the development of the strategies and action steps. The core Cal-OAR team utilized tools provided by the CDSS and the Cal-OAR website to plan and draft the Cal-SIP report. Tools were modified to adapt to the CWD's specific and unique needs, including internal timelines, partner and collaborator participation, engagement processes, and available reports for tracking purposes. The CWD approached the Cal-SIP as an opportunity for the Workforce Services (WFS) Bureau to further examine the current CalWORKs program, barrier removal services, and supportive services focusing on specific performance measures that will produce the most effective outcomes for the current Cal-OAR cycle. Additionally, partner and collaborator engagement resulted in strengthening existing relationships for continuous quality improvement and support for customers served by all agencies involved.

2. Briefly describe past and current system improvement efforts.

The CWD partnered with the Sanctuary Institute to learn about trauma-informed interview methods which includes trauma awareness, adverse childhood experiences, building trauma awareness, and practicing self-care. The CWD trained staff on these methods to enhance existing participant services and employee self-care. Additionally, the CWD enhanced the use of the CalWORKs 2.0 tools to expand trauma-informed and motivational interviewing methods to assist customers in identifying personal and family goals while supporting efforts to become work ready. These efforts include working directly with local Adult Schools and Community Colleges to advocate and support participant engagement in obtaining General Educational Development (GED) certification, pursuing further education and training courses, and enrolling in English as a Second Language (ESL) courses while providing the necessary supportive services to ensure successful participation. The CWD also strengthened the partnership with the local Adult Schools to include job readiness and job search education which assists participants in identifying desired educational and/or career paths that lead to self-sufficiency.

3. Briefly describe the success or failure of those efforts at improving service delivery or programmatic outcomes.

The CWD is committed to trauma-informed interviewing and believes that it is essential to how customers are engaged. The CWD also believes that our work with community partners, including local Adult Schools and Community Colleges, has been fruitful. We anticipate that these approaches will improve participant engagement and outcomes, particularly now that blanket good cause policies, which were enacted due to the pandemic, have been lifted. Feedback from participants, community partners and internal staff has helped the CWD identify gaps, needs and best practices. Based on participant forums hosted by CWD staff, it was shared that the flexibility during the pandemic supported our families in engaging in activities. It was also shared that the expansion of in-person appointments and implementation of virtual and hybrid options greatly increased participants' abilities to attend scheduled meetings due to limitations from the pandemic and other external causes.

4. An overview of the CWD's organizational vision and mission (optional).

The Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department vision is to continue to be a thriving community where all individuals and families can be healthy, safe, secure, and self-sufficient. Our mission is to partner with the community to deliver quality services to ensure access to resources that support, protect, and empower individuals and families to achieve self-sufficiency.

Section 1: Measures for Improvement and Strategies

Part 1: Measure and Goal Narrative

1. Describe the reason for selecting the measure or programmatic grouping of measures.

The CWD identified the OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate, Sanction Rate, and First Activity Attendance Rate as areas needing improvement based upon the Cal-OAR Performance Measure reports and internal case management reports. The process of referring cases at CalWORKs approval to Welfare-to-Work (WTW) is an area needing improvement. Strategies noted throughout this Cal-SIP will be implemented to decrease our Sanction Rate to ensure participants are provided maximum opportunities to engage in WTW while receiving barrier removal and job skills development services to assist in achieving self-sufficiency. Additionally, ensuring participants are educated about the benefits of WTW engagement, including receipt of transportation supportive services, Stage 1 Childcare, and other ancillary supportive services while attending activities is an area in which we identified an opportunity for growth.

2. Do partners and collaborators agree this is a measure or programmatic grouping of measures that should be focused on at this time?

In-depth discussions took place with partners and collaborators who provided insight and feedback on the identified measures. Recommendations to expand virtual appointment options and work further with partners to reduce WTW sanctions were shared to assist the CWD in developing strategies for targeted improvement and have been incorporated in the strategies and action steps outlined throughout the Cal-SIP.

3. Describe any anticipated interactions with other measures.

WTW engagement measures intersect as each performance measure addresses an area of the participant's time receiving assistance. The Sanction Rate directly impacts the Engagement Rate, whether it be the OCAT/Appraisal Timeliness Completion Rate or the First Activity Participation Rate as initial engagement leads to subsequent engagement or lack thereof. As the CWD works toward reducing the Sanction Rate and engages participants in a shorter amount of time, efforts will be reflected in other performance measures both directly and indirectly.

4. Describe how the CWD will track performance measure improvement.

The CWD will continue to utilize Cal-OAR Performance Measure reports and the Cal-OAR data dashboard. Additionally, the CWD will utilize internal ad-hoc and eXemplar reports, internal surveys, and discussions with customers, while continually meeting with staff to identify strategies to reduce sanctions and overall increase engagement. The Cal-OAR team will meet regularly to review the progress of the Cal-SIP and host regular meetings with internal staff and external partners to share the identified improvements and strategies developed to positively impact the performance measures.

Part 2: Goal-level Descriptions

Goal 1: Increase OCAT/ Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate to 21% from 17%. Review using Cal-OAR dashboard and county reports improving by 1.0% every 6 months within 2 years (for a total of a 4.0% improvement).

- **Strategy 1:** Improve on the timeliness of referring eligible participants to WTW upon CalWORKs approval.
- **Strategy 2:** Schedule participant's WTW OCAT/Appraisal in a timelier manner.
- **Strategy 3:** Reinforce policy for staff through internal Staff Development training and issuance of policy documents.
- **Strategy 4:** Evaluate subpopulation data to identify disparities and/or gaps as it relates to the timely delivery of the OCAT.

1. Explain the reasoning or methodology which was used to determine this goal.

The OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate was identified as a challenge in this review period which occurred during the pandemic. Participants were given blanket good cause from participating in WTW due to employment barriers and resource limitations during the pandemic which resulted in fewer participants engaging in WTW. This directly impacted the CWD's ability to consistently conduct WTW OCAT/Appraisals with participants. Additionally, through evaluation of the disaggregated Cal-OAR data, the CWD identified a delay in referring newly approved CalWORKs cases to WTW.

2. What led the CWD to these improvement strategies?

Based on our internal data and Cal-OAR data, management reviews, and evaluation of operational business processes, a timeliness deficiency was identified in referring newly approved CalWORKs cases to WTW in addition to scheduling participants for the WTW OCAT/Appraisal. Efforts will be made to improve in these areas by providing policy support, training for staff through the CWD Staff Development unit, and regular monitoring.

3. Discuss any research or literature that supports the strategies chosen. Cite reference(s), if applicable.

Utilizing the CalWORKs 2.0 model, the CWD will enhance the "goal, plan, do, review" process at WTW OCAT/Appraisal. The CWD will continue to utilize CDSS and Mathematica resources to support improvements in engagement in WTW OCAT/Appraisal through the noted science-based goal achievement framework. The CWD will continue to utilize motivational interviewing techniques to engage families. Additionally, the CWD will explore further marketing techniques for job readiness and other appropriate activities while aligning activities to the participant's personal and family goals.

References:

Mathematica. CalWORKs 2.0. Retrieved 28, August 2023.

<https://calworksnextgen.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/calworks20reference.pdf>

UC Davis. CalWORKs 2.0 and Meaningful Welfare-to-Work Plans. Retrieved 23, August 2023. <https://humanservices.ucdavis.edu/course/calworks-20-and-meaningful-welfare-work-plans>

4. Describe the roles of each partner and collaborator in implementing the selected strategies.

The role of partners and collaborators was to participate through various stakeholder meetings and surveys. Additionally, our community partners collaborate with the CWD to provide direct participant activities and services. Shared perspectives from partners and collaborators were fundamental in identifying the CWDs gaps and strategies. Through these meetings, our partners and collaborators were able to provide feedback and offer ideas for improving the referral process and scheduling the WTW OCAT/Appraisal. The CWD will continue to meet with partners and collaborators on a regular basis to gather ongoing feedback and ideas. Additionally, the CWD will continue to host focus groups through our Policy & Planning unit, evaluate the outcomes, and utilize various reports which will allow the CWD to analyze real-time data and quickly pivot as necessary.

5. Identify any staff education and training needs, and include any technical assistance needed to implement strategy and achieve goal.

Expanding current training curriculum to include more in-depth WTW training for CalWORKs and WTW staff is the first step in our strategy. Through collaboration with our internal Staff Development unit, we can target the areas needing the most improvement and train staff to understand the gaps and contribution they can make to enhance participant services. Additionally, the CWD will utilize the Cal-OAR data toolkits and reports offered by the CDSS. We will also meet with our CDSS CQI Specialist and the CDSS Cal-OAR team for additional clarification on the Cal-SIP process, CQI methods, and data questions as needed.

6. Describe how the CWD plans to mitigate and/or address both known internal and external barriers to achieve this goal.

The CWD will continue to explore WTW program marketing techniques to better inform participants of the program and connect those participants with program services and activity opportunities. Additionally, the CWD plans to expand participant outreach efforts through text messaging, social media campaigns, and increased telephone contacts. The Policy & Planning unit will assist with participant outreach to garner feedback on areas needing improvement. Additionally, through training, reports, and improved case management, internal barriers will be closely monitored, and changes made as necessary to improve timely referrals to WTW from CalWORKs approval and appointment scheduling for WTW OCAT/Appraisal. Furthermore, the Policy & Planning unit will regularly evaluate OCAT/Appraisal timeliness and compare to the disaggregated data to identify any areas of inequity and need for improvement. We are investigating if

it would improve our referral process to utilize the CalSAWS auto-assignment of cases from CalWORKs intake approval to WTW.

7. Describe how your facility will continuously evaluate each action step taken to see if improvement is being achieved. (e.g., tracking tools, meetings, monitoring, etc.) Include who will be responsible for follow-up and compliance.

The CWD will continue to explore WTW program marketing techniques to better inform participants of the program and connect those participants with program services and activity opportunities. Additionally, the CWD plans to expand participant outreach efforts through text messaging, social media campaigns, and increased telephone contacts. The Policy & Planning unit will assist with participant outreach to garner feedback on areas needing improvement. Additionally, through training, reports, and improved case management, internal barriers will be closely monitored, and changes made as necessary to improve timely referrals to WTW from CalWORKs approval and appointment scheduling for WTW OCAT/Appraisal. Furthermore, the Policy & Planning unit will regularly evaluate OCAT/Appraisal timeliness and compare to the disaggregated data to identify any areas of inequity and need for improvement. We are investigating if it would improve our referral process to utilize the CalSAWS auto-assignment of cases from CalWORKs intake approval to WTW.

Goal 2: Decrease Sanction Rate to 11% from 13%. Review using Cal-OAR dashboard and county reports improving by 0.5% every 6 months within 2 years (for a total of a 2.0% improvement).

- **Strategy 1:** Cure sanction at time of CalWORKs application.
- **Strategy 2:** Provide additional flexibility when participants are unable to engage in WTW activity before initiating WTW sanction.
- **Strategy 3:** Reinforce policy for staff through internal Staff Development training and issuance of policy documents.
- **Strategy 4:** Evaluate subpopulation data to identify disparities and/or gaps as it relates to sanctioning WTW participants.

1. Explain the reasoning or methodology which was used to determine this goal.

During the review period, the CWD conducted an analysis of the Cal-OAR disaggregate WTW sanction (financial penalty) data and then investigated the cause and resolution, some of which was identified as participants being excused from WTW engagement due to the pandemic. Through outreach efforts, the CWD attempted to work with participants through WTW engagement; however, a significant number of participants did not respond to the CWD's request to resolve their sanction. Additionally, the CWD identified an opportunity to expand participant program education, WTW re-engagement outreach, and access to the supportive services available to support engagement.

This will allow the CWD to streamline the process for participants and strengthen the partnership between our CalWORKs and WTW staff during the CalWORKs interview appointment.

2. What led the CWD to these improvement strategies?

The CWD's current business process was evaluated, and it was determined that addressing WTW sanctions at CalWORKs intake prior to approval will afford participants the opportunity to receive a higher cash grant, access available supportive services, and assist the CWD in achieving a lower WTW Sanction Rate. CWD staff will offer more appointment scheduling flexibility for the participant to discuss their current situation and possible barrier(s) leading to the non-compliance. The CWD will provide additional training and policy to staff on re-engagement strategies, identifying barriers, and setting goals with activity flexibilities in mind.

3. Discuss any research or literature that supports the strategies chosen. Cite reference(s), if applicable.

The CWD has includes best practices used by other counties who have a lower Sanction Rate including focusing on re-engaging participants before imposing WTW sanctions. This includes more robust application of the CalWORKs 2.0 methodology and trauma-informed interviewing techniques. Additionally, by taking a comprehensive approach during the CalWORKs intake process to identify immediate service needs more quickly, the WTW staff can assist participants in removing barriers and curing WTW sanctions. In order to minimize sanctions, the CWD will provide additional flexibilities which may include engaging participants on a lower level of engagement with a higher level of support eventually leading to a higher level of engagement with a lower level of support, as appropriate.

References:

Vu, C.M., Anthony, E.K., & Austin, M.J. Strategies for engaging adults in Welfare-to-Work activities. Antipoverty Efforts for Vulnerable Families (2009). Retrieved 23 August 2023.

https://mackcenter.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/publications/strategies_for_engaging_adults_in_welfare-to-work_activities.pdf.

Goldberg, H. & Schott, L. A compliance-oriented approach to sanctions in state and county TANF programs (2000). Retrieved 25 August 2023.

<https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/archive/10-1-00sliip.htm>.

4. Describe the roles of each partner and collaborator in implementing the selected strategies.

The role of internal and external partners and collaborators was instrumental in helping the CWD identify gaps and develop strategies to address our Sanction Rate. This

included identifying a need to better educate our participants about the WTW program, barrier removal services, and available supportive services such as Stage 1 Childcare, transportation, ancillary services, educational support, and technology support. This education extends to WTW activities in the community with contracted partners to extend the message of available supportive services and benefits to curing a WTW sanction. The CWD will continue to utilize partner and collaborator feedback for process improvement and program implementation.

5. Identify any staff education and training needs, and include any technical assistance needed to implement strategy and achieve goal.

Additional WTW training will be included in the CalWORKs curriculum to ensure the policy and business process is clear and understood. This will include enhanced education about the WTW program overall, benefits of participating, and available support when engaged in WTW. Additionally, we will continue to invite our community partners to various internal trainings to educate our staff on available activities.

6. Describe how the CWD plans to mitigate and/or address both known internal and external barriers to achieve this goal.

The CWD will redirect current staff and resources to focus on the importance of curing WTW sanctions, providing additional support when participants cannot engage in WTW prior to initiating non-compliance and sanction, and connecting regularly with our WTW population to ensure information about the program is clear and concise. We continue to meet regularly with our external contracted and non-contracted partners to support activities available for participants to ensure a myriad of activity options are available for engagement. Additionally, the Policy & Planning unit will continue to review Cal-OAR disaggregate data to identify if any subpopulations have been more greatly impacted by WTW sanctions and will work with the Cal-OAR team to identify strategies to address these issues, if any.

7. Describe how your facility will continuously evaluate each action step taken to see if improvement is being achieved. (e.g., tracking tools, meetings, monitoring, etc.) Include who will be responsible for follow up and compliance.

The Cal-OAR team, Operations staff, Policy & Planning unit, and Senior Management team will meet regularly to review the CWDs progress of decreasing the WTW Sanction Rate. They will utilize reports available in CalSAWS as well as ad-hoc reports. The Executive Management team will review reports and performance monthly.

Goal 3: Increase First Activity Attendance Rate to 64% from 62%. Review using Cal-OAR dashboard and county reports increasing 0.5% every 6 months within 2 years (for a total of a 2% improvement).

- **Strategy 1:** Increase outreach to educate participants about scheduled appointments with their WTW worker and activity attendance.
- **Strategy 2:** Provide more upfront transportation and other supportive services to support participant activity engagement.
- **Strategy 3:** Evaluate subpopulation data to identify disparities and/or gaps as it relates to first activity attendance.

1. Explain the reasoning or methodology which was used to determine this goal.

The First Activity Attendance Rate was identified as a challenge in this review period which occurred during the pandemic. Participants were given good cause from participating in WTW due to employment barriers and resource limitations during the pandemic which resulted in fewer participants engaging in WTW and overall WTW engagement in first activities after signing the WTW Plan. Additionally, employment and other activities with employers and community-based organizations were reduced or eliminated during this review period; therefore, the CWD was limited in the ability to refer participants to activities which directly impacted this performance measure.

2. What led the CWD to these improvement strategies?

Through operational reports and Cal-OAR data, the CWD identified reduced activity engagement throughout this review period which has led the CWD to strive to increase participation and support for WTW customers seeking employment, attending school, and barrier removal services. Throughout the pandemic, the CWD recognized the importance of offering in-person and virtual activities including online education opportunities, a range of employment opportunities, and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) who provide different methods to access barrier removal services. As the post pandemic period continues to unfold, the CWD can strengthen re-engagement efforts to connect participants to the most appropriate activity based on the participant's personal and family goals. Additionally, the CWD will provide training to refresh staff on re-engagement and activity retention strategies.

3. Discuss any research or literature that supports the strategies chosen. Cite reference(s), if applicable.

The CWD will continue to identify and develop training that supports WTW staff with participant re-engagement. Through the CalWORKs 2.0 model, staff will work more closely with participants to identify their individual personal and family goals to best connect them to resources and activities to achieve these goals. As participants engage in activities, the WTW worker will strengthen follow-up strategies, ensuring participants are meeting their goals and quickly pivoting when necessary to new or different

employment or educational activities. The State Support Network (SSN) and International City/County Management Association (ICMA) describes the importance and necessity of identifying specific goals within the family and individual adult to support re-engagement and continual attendance in educational and employment activities, particularly when adults are facing a variety of barriers. The CWD will make efforts to focus on identifying and assisting the participant in accessing barrier removal services which will support the individual and family in achieving their overall goals and reaching various levels of personal and professional success.

References:

DiGiovanna, P.B. (2021 September 1). Engaging marginalized communities: challenges and best practices. Retrieved August 23, 2023. <https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/engaging-marginalized-communities-challenges-and-best-practices>
Jacques, C. & Villegas, A. (2018 December). Strategies for equitable family engagement. Retrieved August 24, 2023. https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/10/equitable_family_engag_508.pdf

4. Describe the roles of each partner and collaborator in implementing the selected strategies.

Throughout the pandemic and post-pandemic period, the CWD has continued to meet with community and internal partners to discuss strategies to enhance activities and barrier removal services to include in-person and virtual options. A variety of options were developed and put into place as well as expanding available technological support for participants to assist them in accessing services and activities. The CWD continues to meet with community and internal partners to evaluate the success of these efforts and determine if additional changes are necessary.

5. Identify any staff education and training needs, and include any technical assistance needed to implement strategy and achieve goal.

The WTW staff will receive training to further develop re-engagement strategies and reinforce CalWORKs 2.0 strategies. The Cal-OAR team will continue to invite our community partners to various internal staff trainings to share resources and activities that are available for participants. Through regular monitoring with operational reports and Cal-OAR data, the Operational staff, Cal-OAR team, and Policy & Planning unit will evaluate the success of activity re-engagement and first activity attendance.

6. Describe how the CWD plans to mitigate and/or address both known internal and external barriers to achieve this goal.

The Policy & Planning unit will continue to review Cal-OAR disaggregate data to identify if any subpopulations have less access to activities or barrier removal services and provide immediate feedback for the Cal-OAR team and Operational managers to expand access within the community. The CWD will continue to meet with community partners to explore additional resources and ways to enhance access for participants

throughout the county.

7. Describe how your facility will continuously evaluate each action step taken to see if improvement is being achieved. (e.g., tracking tools, meetings, monitoring, etc.) Include who will be responsible for follow up and compliance.

The Cal-OAR team, Operations staff, Policy & Planning unit, and Senior Management team will meet regularly to review the CWDs progress of increasing the First Activity Attendance Rate. They will utilize reports available in CalSAWS as well as ad-hoc reports. The Executive Management team will review reports and performance monthly.

Section 2: Peer Review

Peer county/ counties selected for collaboration and consultation:

Yolo

1. Discuss how the Peer Review process impact Cal-SIP development.

The purpose of the Peer Review process is to partner with a county or counties who are thriving in performance measures where we are aiming to improve, in addition to counties sharing best and most promising practices and techniques to improve mutual performance measures included in the Cal-SIP. We decided to limit our Peer Review County partnership to one county, Yolo County, to allow us ample time to focus on Cal-SIP development. The feedback and recommendations gained through the Peer Review process validated and complemented our existing Cal-SIP strategies and some of our action steps developed during the Cal-SIP planning stage. For example, one of our strategies for improving our OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate is to explore implementation of the CalSAWS auto-case assignment function. We learned through this process that Yolo County has seen improvement in their OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness through the implementation of the CalSAWS auto-case assignment functionality. Overall, the Peer Review component was very helpful.

2. Discuss steps taken to conduct peer review.

We partnered with Yolo County for the Peer Review component of the Cal-SIP due to us sharing similar characteristics, such as using the same case management system, having the same Cal-OAR Team structure, and using a caseload-based worker model. Some of the steps taken for the Peer Review included the CWD Cal-OAR Team conducting frequent internal planning meetings to review the Peer Review Toolkit and discuss use of the tools provided. The counties met weekly as both "host" and "peer" counties to review the Cal-SIP documents, discuss the selected performance measures, measure and goal narratives, and goal summaries. Both counties provided support and feedback on the areas reviewed, insight, and ideas for improvement and best practices.

3. Briefly summarize observations and action items from Peer Review process.

The CWD's peer review partner provided direct feedback for targeted improvement in the three goal areas of OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate, Sanction Rate, and First Activity Attendance Rate. Through this review process, the peer review county identified a CalSAWS business process that automates referrals to WTW workers that we may implement which will directly positively impact the OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate, Sanction Rate, and First Activity Attendance Rate. The peer review county also asked targeted questions which helped us develop our Cal-SIP and outline our goals and summaries more clearly. For example, Yolo County recommended we elaborate on our training plans regarding social media.

The knowledge and feedback from the peer review county provided a different perspective for our Cal-OAR team to assist in setting Cal-SIP goals and business processes.

Section 3: Target Measure Summary

Goal 1: Increase OCAT/ Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate to 21% from 17%. Review using Cal-OAR dashboard and county reports improving by 1.0% every 6 months within 2 years (for a total of a 4.0% improvement).

Performance Measure: OCAT/ Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate

Baseline Result: 17%

Cal-SIP Start	Progress Report #1:	Progress Report #2:	Cycle End Date:
Time: 02/01/2024	02/21/2025	03/27/2026	06/30/2026

Strategies, Action Steps, and Tracking Improvement:

Strategy 1: Improve timeliness of referring eligible participants to WTW upon CalWORKs approval.

Action Steps:

- Through training and policy issuances, reinforce the requirement to refer CalWORKs approved cases with Stage 1 Childcare to WTW the same day approved and expand requirement to all WTW eligible participants.
- Support the operational business process that exempt WTW participants are to be referred to WTW to monitor exemption through ongoing training and policy reminders.
- At the initial eligibility determination to add an adult to an ongoing CalWORKs case, the CalWORKs worker will refer the individual to WTW as appropriate.

Strategy 2: Schedule participant's WTW OCAT/Appraisal in a timelier manner.

Action Steps:

- Expand outreach efforts that educate participants about the WTW program, available supportive services, and incentives. During the outreach, staff will offer the customer various options for OCAT/Appraisal appointment times.
- Utilize operational reports to monitor WTW referrals and OCAT/Appraisal scheduling dates.
- Through training and policy issuances, reiterate the required timeframes for scheduling WTW OCAT/Appraisal upon CalWORKs approval.

Strategy 3: Reinforce policy for staff through internal Staff Development training and issuance of policy documents.

Action Steps:

- Through refresher trainings and policy issuances, remind staff of the operational referral process from CalWORKs to WTW.
- Conduct ongoing monitoring to review referral timeliness compliance.
- Incorporate WTW policy in CalWORKs training provided by Staff Development.

Strategy 4: Evaluate subpopulation data to identify disparities and/or gaps as it relates to the timely delivery of the OCAT.

Action Steps:

- Review and analyze disaggregated data provided by CDSS and other available sources to determine if and which subpopulation of the CalWORKs/Welfare to Work program is underserved.
- Conduct root cause analysis, including partner and collaborator engagement to determine the root cause of disparities/gaps in the following areas, but not limited to service delivery, policies, and business processes.
- Develop strategies and actions steps that aim to close the gaps on disparity findings.
- Include strategies, action steps, and any other pertinent information in Progress Report #1 due on 02/21/2025.

Tracking: The Cal-OAR team, Operations staff, and Senior Management team will meet regularly to review the CWD's progress of the OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate. They will utilize reports available in CalSAWS as well as ad-hoc reports. The Executive Management team will review reports and performance monthly.

Goal 2: Decrease Sanction Rate to 11% from 13%. Review using Cal-OAR dashboard and county reports improving by 0.5% every 6 months within 2 years (for a total of a 2.0% improvement).

Performance Measure: Sanction Rate

Baseline Result: 13%

Cal-SIP Start Time:	Progress Report #1:	Progress Report #2:	Cycle End Date:
02/01/2024	02/21/2025	03/27/2026	06/30/2026

Strategies, Action Steps, and Tracking Improvement:

Strategy 1: Cure sanction at time of CalWORKs application.

Action Steps:

- At CalWORKs Intake and redetermination, WTW staff will coordinate curing the WTW sanction at CalWORKs interview.
- The WTW worker and participant will review and complete the WTW curing sanction forms (WTW 29 and WTW 2).
- During the curing sanction process, the WTW worker will conduct WTW orientation and OCAT/Appraisal with the participant.
- During every CalWORKs intake and redetermination, CalWORKs staff will explain the benefits of participating in WTW, available supportive services, Stage 1 Childcare, etc.
- At CalWORKs approval, the assigned CalWORKs worker will cure the WTW

sanction and begin aiding previously sanctioned participant.

Strategy 2: Provide additional flexibility when participants are unable to engage in WTW activity before initiating WTW sanction.

Action Steps:

- WTW Workers will be assigned a monthly targeted number of WTW sanctioned participants to contact for WTW re-engagement.
- Establish a participant text message campaign to cure sanctions.
- Increase participant education regarding WTW supportive services, childcare, support when attending school, etc.
- Remind staff through policy issuances to utilize all available resources for sanctioned participants.
- Reinstate home visits/outreach by Employment Services Worker/Social Worker for WTW participants to assist in curing sanctions.

Strategy 3: Reinforce policy for staff through internal Staff Development training and issuance of policy documents.

Action Steps:

- Provide staff training to reinforce strategies on re-engagement and the WTW curing sanction process.
- Publish All Staff communications, other materials, and videos to educate staff.

Strategy 4: Evaluate subpopulation data to identify disparities and/or gaps as it relates to sanctioning WTW participants.

Action Steps:

- Review and analyze disaggregated data provided by CDSS and other available sources to determine if and which subpopulation of the CalWORKs/Welfare to Work program is sanctioned at a higher rate compared to overall.
- Conduct root cause analysis, including partner and collaborator engagement to determine the root cause of disparities/gaps in the following areas, but not limited to service delivery, policies, and business processes.
- Develop strategies and actions steps that aim to close the gaps on disparity findings.
- Include strategies, action steps, and any other pertinent information in Progress Report #1 due on 02/21/2025.

Tracking: The Cal-OAR team, Operations staff, and Senior Management team will meet regularly to review the CWD's progress of the Sanction Rate. They will utilize reports available in CalSAWS as well as ad-hoc reports. The Executive Management team will review reports and performance monthly.

Goal 3: Increase First Activity Attendance Rate to 64% from 62%. Review using Cal-OAR dashboard and county reports increasing by 0.5% every 6 months within 2 years (for a total of a 2% improvement).

Performance Measure: First Activity Attendance Rate

Baseline Result: 62%

Cal-SIP Start	Progress Report	Progress Report #2:	Cycle End Date:
Time: 02/01/2024	#1: 02/21/2025	03/27/2026	06/30/2026

Strategies, Action Steps, and Tracking Improvement:

Strategy 1: Increase outreach to educate participants about scheduled appointments with their WTW worker and activity attendance.

Action Steps:

- Establish text messages to remind participants of appointments and start of activities.
- Implement a process for staff to conduct a check-in call with participants prior to the start of their activity to answer any questions and remind them of supportive services and childcare.

Strategy 2: Provide more upfront transportation & other supportive services to support participant activity engagement.

Action Steps:

- Upon assignment of case, contact participant by telephone to encourage WTW activity attendance and discuss transportation, Stage 1 Childcare, and other available supportive services.
- Ensure participant has necessary resources to select Stage 1 Childcare provider through referrals to our local Resource and Referral Agency.
- Increase marketing of available incentives and continue to issue incentives based on activity enrollment and participation.

Strategy 3: Evaluate subpopulation data to identify disparities and/or gaps as it relates to first activity attendance.

Action Steps:

- Review and analyze disaggregated data provided by CDSS and other available sources to determine if and which subpopulation of the CaWORKs/Welfare to Work program is underserved.
- Conduct root cause analysis, including partner and collaborator engagement to determine the root cause of disparities/gaps in the following areas, but not limited to service delivery, policies, and business processes.
- Develop strategies and actions steps that aim to close the gaps on disparity findings.
- Include strategies, action steps, and any other pertinent information in Progress Report #1 due on 02/21/2025.

Tracking: The Cal-OAR team, Operations staff, Policy & Planning unit, and Senior Management team will meet regularly to review the CWDs progress of increasing the First Activity Attendance Rate. They will utilize reports available in CalSAWS as well as ad-hoc reports. The Executive Management team will review reports and performance monthly.