

CalWORKs System Improvement Plan (Cal-SIP) Report

County: Mendocino

Executive Summary	2
Introduction	4
Section 1: Measures for Improvement and Strategies	7
Part 1: Measure and Goal Narrative	7
Part 2: Goal-level Descriptions	8
Section 2: Peer Review	18
Section 3: Target Measure Summary.....	20

Executive Summary

1. Please summarize the performance measures selected for improvement.

Mendocino County has undertaken a system improvement plan as one of three components to California's Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Outcomes and Accountability Review (Cal-OAR). Cal-OAR (Senate Bill 89, Chapter 24, 2017) directs county welfare departments (CWD) to conduct a CalWORKs County Self-Assessment (Cal-CSA) every five years and develop a subsequent county CalWORKs System Improvement Plan (Cal-SIP) from the assessment that responds to community needs by selecting at least 1 of 26 state established performance measures covering six programmatic groupings. Using goals, strategies, and activities to assist low-income families to become self-sufficient of government aid, Mendocino selected Cal-OAR performance measures Engagement Rate and Sanction Rate within the programmatic grouping Ongoing Engagement.

Through collection of data from key informant and personal interviews, focus groups, administrative data systems, and primary data sources, the Cal-CSA revealed several disparities depending on subcategory status (i.e., case type, WTW program status, age, race/ethnicity, and/or language) of WTW participants. For example, Native Americans/Pacific Islander exhibited higher sanction rates than other racial/ethnic groups. Additionally, two-parent households experienced engagement rates lower than those of single-parent households. Lastly, systemic issues of communication and community outreach were found to be challenges within the CWD in serving families. The identified disparities may also have been influenced by an unprecedented impact of COVID-19 on social services and well-being of families within the county.

Furthermore, the Cal-CSA revealed that the county's engagement rate was falling, and its sanction rate was rising when compared to the state's average rates. At the same time, the percentage of WTW participants being sanctioned were much higher than California's average. A system with grey areas for administrative decisions regarding step-by-step sanctions may have the effect of keeping individuals under pre- and post-sanctioning for longer periods of time without reducing the chance that WTW participants would not be sanctioned. Given the apparent increase in WTW sanctions, at least in Mendocino, it may be important for CWD to focus on more early engagement during WTW orientations (e.g., in-person orientations) as a strategy to increase engagement and decrease sanction. Likewise, more intensive periodic outreach and communications to community partners and collaborators, WTW staff, and WTW participants would appear warranted given the significant increase in the percentage of sanctioned individuals.

In summary, in order to improve upon identified performance measure disparities and systemic issues, Mendocino's 2021-2026 Cal-SIP seeks to (1) increase the overall engagement rate from 64 percent to 66 percent and (2) to reduce the average overall sanction rate to 35 percent from 37 percent.

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

Mendocino county seeks to improve their performance by implementing the following strategies:

Engagement Rate

Strategy 1: Maximizing early engagement opportunities with WTW participants. (With 3 Action Steps).

Strategy 2: Expand access to the activities available for WTW participants. (With 3 Action Steps).

Strategy 3: Increase tribal outreach for meaningful collaboration regarding Native American participants and cultural activity involvement that can be applied to WTW participation hours. (With 3 Action Steps).

Sanction Rate

Strategy 1: Decrease the number of WTW participants going into sanction (With 4 Action Steps).

Strategy 2: Improve and/or refine outreach to pre-sanctioned and sanctioned WTW participants. (With 3 Action Steps).

Strategy 3: Heighten ESR focus on engaged participants not meeting required hours to encourage incremental increase of hours monthly to progress toward meeting participation requirements. (With 3 Action Steps).

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 selects 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

In order to complete our Cal-SIP report, Mendocino County utilized several tools provided by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), utilizing a participatory approach that centered on significant involvement of Welfare-to-Work (WTW) participants (i.e., current and former), CalWORKs Eligibility (ES) and Job Services (CJS) staff, and community partners and collaborators (CPCs).

The Mendocino County Department of Social Services (MCDSS) created a County Cal-OAR Team (CCOT) as required by ACL 19-108 to conduct the Cal-SIP process. The team members were staff from within the MCDSS's Employment and Family Assistance Services Division (EFAS). We also created Mendocino County Outcomes and Accountability Review Team (MCOART), comprised of staff from county, including representation from EFAS, Public Health Home Visiting Program (HVP), and Mendocino Community College. MCOART invited CPCs to a series of planning meetings to provide an overview of Cal-OAR and their respective potential roles and contributions. MCOART discussed the performance measures to be used for this cycle and to allow for questions regarding the continuous quality improvement (Cal-CQI) process. MCOART was instrumental in reaching out to CPCs for insight into the most effective strategies and action steps to reach Cal-SIP goals of improving ongoing rate of engagement and reducing the sanction rate.

CCOT prepared the Cal-SIP with data analysis compiled by the CJS Data Analytics Program (JDAP). JDAP was utilized to collect, analyze, and disseminate Cal-OAR data and information throughout the county and amongst CPCs and other stakeholders and was tasked with collaborating with CDSS Program Innovation and Evaluation Bureau for

the completion of the Cal-OAR Project. JDAP collected knowledge, information, and data for this report from CalWORKs staff, public health officials, educational agencies, non-profits, governmental agencies, CPCs, and other relevant stakeholders. While we received limited responses from the CDSS Cal-OAR Client Satisfaction Survey (CSS), we utilized responses from a survey of MCDSS former and current CalWORKs participants to provide experiences and qualitative data to augment primary quantitative data from the CDSS Cal-OAR Data Dashboard. Additionally, JDAP was responsible for coordinating drafts of the Cal-SIP report, which were reviewed and edited by CCOT and MCDSS leadership and management.

Lastly, the county employed tools and practices from the Racial Equity and Implicit Bias (REIB) Statewide Initiative. CDSS launched the REIB Initiative based on the 2021 Human services omnibus budget trailer bill (Assembly Bill 135, Section 44, which added Section 11523.6 to the Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC). The statute requires CDSS CalWORKs and CalFresh programs and its partners to develop and implement resources and training as part of an intentional shift to trauma-informed, anti-racist, anti-stigma, and trauma-informed practices into programs and services. The county used workgroups and committees for discussions of bias, staff training in analytical techniques to disaggregate data to improve outreach to subpopulations within the county and continues to utilize communication tools to provide information to staff about equity and bias.

2. Briefly describe past and current system improvement efforts.

Since 2008 Mendocino County has used an internal workgroup comprised of CalWORKs Job Services manager, two supervisors, four program specialists, and two lead employment and training workers, called CalSAM (CalWORKs Supervisors, Analysts, and Managers). This group meets monthly to review processes and identify trends to make system improvement recommendations. Policy changes, written direction, and best practices generated at CalSAM are communicated to staff through email and reviewed in person at monthly meetings. Examples of changes initiated by CalSAM are the updating of the Welfare-to-Work (WTW) Orientation slideshow presentation and the WTW handbook to improve the consistency and effectiveness of the information given to participants. Another improvement need identified and addressed by the group was the process of case reading of the ETWs as it was proving to be time intensive for the case readers and causing anxiety for case workers, making it a less effective learning tool. Most recent enhancement is opening up initial engagement opportunities for participants to be available both on phone and in person through the reinstatement of in person orientations.

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

When the information for the Orientation presentation was updated, it was rolled out in all three offices at the same time. CalSAM received immediate input from the staff

conducting the presentations and as a result improvements were able to be made quickly and seamlessly, taking into consideration the experience for presenters and how information was received by participants.

The changes made to the case reading process were a direct result of input from staff about both the effectiveness and amount of time was being used up in the review. The effort was to continue to look at cases and offer input to staff but to reduce the number of cases being read while increasing the quality of the feedback being given. This was another situation in which CalSAM was able to implement change and refine it when concerns were brought forward. The reaction from staff has been very positive of the change and though it appears the error rate in cases has remained static, the amount of time saved by workers to focus on more cases has been a substantial benefit.

The challenge of this process is that the input is limited to staff impressions being reported and the limited number of ideas that can come from a smaller group like CalSAM. A recent addition that is being incorporated is the collaboration with community partners and surveying of participant's experiences to increase the information and expand the ideas to address changes. As indicated in this Cal-SIP Mendocino will continue to seek this input as we look for opportunities to improve our systems in place.

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

MCDSS is one of eighteen departments operating under the County CEO to deliver public services. MCDSS's vision - Creating a community of safe and independent families and individuals. MCDSS's mission - To strengthen and empower individuals and families to achieve self-sufficiency, safety, and improve their quality of life; To deliver services in a respectful, effective and efficient manner; To develop, support, and empower staff, individually and in teams, to be professional, competent and highly skilled; To promote and maintain effective and productive relationships with the Department, and with other government led entities, our communities, other agencies, voluntary organization, the business sector and our community.

Under this guidance, our program's goal, with the support of community partners and collaborators, is to support WTW participants and families to become and remain economically, socially, and psychologically self-sufficient.

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.

Mendocino has selected to address the ongoing engagement rate and the overall rate of sanctioned WTW participants. This was determined through input received during the stakeholder engagement process, as well as through review of the periodic Cal-OAR data. The process indicated the county was doing a good job initially engaging with participants during the pandemic versus the state average but saw a drop off in that engagement rate as the case progressed. The sanction resolution rate was included in our initial assessment as the county continues to search for ways to encourage sanctioned participants to reestablish contact and engage in the WTW services offered. We are looking at different uses of the flexibilities started during the pandemic and the response to specific activities to encourage more engaged participants.

While conducting the disaggregated data analysis for our Cal-CSA report, Mendocino found low rates for two-parent households and Hispanics in the last three months of the analysis period. All though both rates were low, they were not seen as a sign of disproportionate rates. The county will continue to monitor disaggregated data and address any gaps in services as a result of data analyses.

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

Several community partners and collaborators (CPCs) mentioned more flexibility with activities could help participants in isolated areas of the county with completing program hours. For example, WTW could work with faith-based organization in rural areas for space usage to provide opportunity to participate in activities that would satisfy participation requirement. Additionally, CPCs indicated that due to domestic violence rates in the community, CalWORKs should work more closely with CPCs providing trauma-informed classes to help WTW participants that are unengaged or possibly sanctioned as they are addressing domestic violence issues.

3. Describe any anticipated interactions with other measures.

Input received from CPCs and CJS staff suggested our primary effort of increasing the ongoing engagement rate would work in conjunction with the goal to reduce the sanction rate within the county. Sanction resolution rate was included in our initial assessment as the county continues to search for ways to encourage sanctioned participants to reestablish contact and engage in the WTW services offered. We will be looking at different uses of flexibilities started during the pandemic like increased opportunities to attend appointments and availability of phone appointments. We will also be monitoring response to activities to identify and encourage specific activities in which participants seem to connect with.

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

Mendocino County will be monitoring and analyzing the results of the proposed system improvement strategies for Engagement Rate on an ongoing systematic basis, using the Cal-OAR data dashboard and internal ad hoc reports showing the proportion of clients who attended their activities and services in the month, as well as other related data, such as continuous quality improvement (CQI) projects examining subpopulation data of WTW activity and service usage. The County Cal-OAR team (CCOT) along with the Mendocino County Cal-OAR team (MCOART) of community partners and collaborators will host regular meetings to discuss the development and ongoing improvements/strategies aligned to increase engagement, while decreasing the rate of sanctions. Tracking of performance measures will also occur through the CDSS customer survey and interviews of WTW participants that are scheduled to visit one of three social service locations. Lastly, the county will continue to support the incorporation of Cal-OAR performance measures, data-driven decision making, and expansion of best practices and promising practices monitored through the CJS Data Analytics Program (JDAP).

Part 2: Goal-level Descriptions

Goal 1: Increase Engagement Rate to 66% from 64%. Review using Cal-OAR Data Dashboard improving by 1.0% every 12 months within 2 years (for a total of a 2.0% improvement).

Strategy 1: *Maximizing early engagement opportunities with WTW participants.*

Strategy 2: *Expand access to the activities available for WTW participants.*

Strategy 3: *Increase tribal outreach for meaningful collaboration regarding Native American participants and cultural activity involvement that can be applied to WTW participation hours.*

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

In review of collected data, CJS focus group (i.e., staff, stakeholders, and management) members noted that WTW participants were missing appointments for case management and WTW related activities. Missed opportunities for participant engagement may have been associated with ETW/participant communications. For example, WTW has experienced staffing shortages and turnover which have impacts on institutional knowledge of caseworkers in supporting participants. Additionally, with pandemic concerns operating within subpopulations in the county, CWD process and quality improvement operations for public safety may have influenced WTW participation in WTW service delivery. Additionally, CJS program management and ETW supervisors noted during program meetings, interviews, and sidebar conversations that

case management notes seem to indicate patterns of low engagement by WTW participants for several reasons including childcare, transportation, health issues, etc.

Attendance at weekly meetings throughout the Cal-CSA process with CPCs to review Cal-OAR and performance measures. This allowed us to systematically examine impacts of process and system changes on how data collected will be used to assist the CWD in reaching Cal-OAR goals and how CWD leadership, management, and supervisors each can handle this data to examine goal selection and performance measure alignment. Second, to better understand the selection of strategies to improve selected performance measures, a subpopulation of disaggregated data pulled from Cal-OAR Data Dashboard and CalSAWS will be presented for analysis to improve WTW operations.

2. What led the CWD to these improvement strategies?

Focus groups with WTW staff and CPCs indicated the county should conduct more community outreach to isolated areas of the county. Outreach should include working with nonprofits in Boonville and Covelo, however, the CPCs were aware of staff shortages at the county and their respective offices impacting new initiatives and service levels. In terms of the Cal-SIP, county will continue to conduct qualitative datamining of information gathered during the Cal-CSA focus groups.

3. Discuss any research or literature that supports the strategies chosen. Cite reference.

A systematic review of past research found WTW program requirements often effect engagement rates of participants because of several factors. In a qualitative study of five high income countries, researchers found that "... WTW requirements often conflicted with child care responsibilities" (Campbell, 2016). In the US WTW program requirements vary by states but are consistent with current philosophy that work requirements serve as incentives for recipients of government relief. Studies have found relationships between WTW program requirements and health and well-being outcomes. Early studies of WTW participants and health status found negative impacts on WTW participants' health. However, more recent studies have noted that "The effects of welfare-to-work interventions on health were generally positive..." (Gibson, 2018).

A systematic review of past research found that Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) engagement rates were affected by organizational factors. Researchers found that staff attitudes and behaviors toward WTW participants may have an impact on engagement and sanction rates (Broughton, 2010). Researchers have found that race and administrative discretion seem to have an impact on WTW participant engagement and potential sanctions placed on clients (Keiser and Choi, 2004). More recent studies looked more specifically at focused experiences of low-income families with government systems which may negatively impact social welfare program implementation such as TANF (Barnes and Henly, 2018). Thus, in considering

Cal-OAR performance measures, the CWD analyzed information from internal surveys of CalWORKs staff and focus groups for the existence of bias by CWD staff.

References:

Campbell, Mhairi et al. (2015). [Lone parents, health, wellbeing and welfare to work: a systematic review of qualitative studies](#). Retrieved July 19, 2022.

Broughton, Chad (2010). Bringing the Organization Back In: The Role of Bureaucratic Churning in Early TANF Caseload Declines in Illinois. Retrieved September 23, 2022. <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol37/iss3/9/>

Gibson, Marcia et al. (2017). Welfare-to-work interventions and their effects on the mental and physical health of lone parents and their children. Retrieved March 23, 2022. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28823111/>

Keiser, LR and Choi, SW (2004). Broughton, Chad (2010). [Race, Bureaucratic Discretion, and the Implementation of Welfare Reform](#). Retrieved September 13, 2022.

4. Describe the roles of other partners and collaborators in implementing the strategies.

CPCs have played a key role in assisting in independently evaluating and assessing the level of success of CalWORKs and WTW steps as implemented to support identifying performance measures and bringing forth vulnerable family experiences with the CWD. CPCs are helping JDAP develop data driven WTW engagement and sanctioning to complete CQI projects and measure the effectiveness of WTW activities and services. CPCs have been supportive of CalWORKs and potentially take a leading role in efforts to achieve positive results and outcomes that work toward WTW participants' economic, psychological, and social self-sufficiency. Through the Cal-CSA, the CWD and CPCs increased community and program engagement with WTW staff and strengthened already existing partnerships among groups and governmental organizations.

County will work with CPCs on data-driven projects and initiatives understanding WTW participants' experiences with program and services across community organizations to improve selected and future performance measures, providing CPC avenues to influence measures.

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

WTW staff will be provided training on data collection, presentation, and analysis. All ETWs will continue to receive CJS quarterly training which provides additional information on CalWORKs and WTW services, and CDSS updates to ETWs. This change in practice will allow ETWs to retain more training materials and provide more customer support with ongoing refresher in their knowledge base of case management.

During the Cal-CSA, it was recommended to reestablish group orientation as a way of engaging WTW participants sooner. WTW staff will receive ongoing training to improve orientations with an emphasis on WTW group orientations.

WTW staff also recommended maintaining cross-training opportunities that not only benefit WTW participants but CalWORKs staff with opportunities for growth, increased wages, and professional development.

Lastly, on the technical side, JDAP will seek CDSS support products and services to help the CWD implement Cal-OAR, especially assistance in assessing metric, benchmarks, and performance measures.

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

Several barriers exist within the county which may influence Cal-SIP goal achievement in engagement rates. A major barrier to achieving the goals of the Cal-SIP is CalWORKs staff. A second barrier to goal achievement of the Cal-SIP is community resources. Mendocino County is currently working on budget issues and trying to mitigate service disruption through consolidation or reducing the building footprint of the county. As the US economy moves to increase the availability of green and service sector jobs, low-wages and pay may persist in Mendocino County. The county's minimum wage was established as \$17.42 for some positions with the county in 2022.

The CWD plans to mitigate barriers by continuing to do outreach to hire more staff. WTW supervisors and management will continue to work with JDAP to incorporate data-driven strategies and practices into WTW program and services for improvement. The CWD intends to improve upon outreach and communication to WTW participants initially and CPCs with monthly program and service updates. The WTW will continue to have monthly and quarterly trainings and cross-training presented by the Senior Program Specialist. The County is working steadfast with vendors to bring more high-speed internet services to residents as noted in its 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. WTW continuously promotes training to WTW staff such as case management and in-house lateral transfers. Using CQI techniques, CJS works with CPCs on improving community partner referrals for service and programs. WTW also is working diligently to have WTW participants utilizing the Expanded Subsidized Employment program. The CWD is also committed to promoting diversity, equity, and including throughout the department. For example, CWD has a DEI officer and staff meet regularly to discuss issues of biases and inclusion. Lastly, WTW uses its Family Stabilization Program to help families address personal and environmental barriers.

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.

JDAP will primarily take the lead in assessing and/or evaluating the implementation of the Cal-CQI processes. JDAP was formed during this 2021-2026 Cal-CQI cycle to assist with implementation of Cal-OAR using TANF and CalWORKs evidence based, evidence informed, best practices, and promising practices. Within the EFAS Division, JDAP will be guided by a Deputy Director, Senior Program Manager (CalWORKs job services) and Program Manager (CalWORKs eligibility). Additionally, JDAP will be supported by a Senior Program Specialist and Program Specialist I/II within CJS.

In understanding its context, JDAP will use a five-tier framework of program evaluation that purposefully incorporates program evaluations within organizations that have a limited budget or no budget for program evaluation.

First, JDAP will revisit the Cal-CSA to fully understand challenges, issues, and opportunities for Cal-WORKs improvements related to rates of ongoing engagement and sanctions. For example, in employing group orientations to improve WTW engagement and reduce sanctions, JDAP will interview and/or survey WTW participants, WTW staff, and CPCs to gather data on their experiences with WTW.

Secondly, actions steps will be monitored for accountability quarterly with CPCs, CDSS, CCOT, MCOART, and WTW staff. During this tier, JDAP will meet quarterly with stakeholder groups and provide an update on the status of each action step and strategy. JDAP will continuously attempt to use aggregated and disaggregated data to ensure WTW is serving intended participants as proposed by actions steps under engagement and sanction goals.

Thirdly, as a part of the five-tier approach, quality review and clarification components will be used by JDAP along with the Plan-Study-Do-Act model. In completing the Cal-CSA, JDAP proactively conducted community outreach that was appreciated by CPCs as noted earlier in invitations that JDAP received to attend CPC meetings. The Cal-OAR outreach will continue to provide WTW staff, participants, and others with information regarding WTW Cal-SIP action steps achievement or modifications.

Fourth, JDAP will work with CCOT and MCOART to address design issues and data analysis steps to see if action steps have been achieved. JDAP will examine action steps to monitor if action steps help improve identified process outcomes as posted on the Cal-OAR Data Dashboard.

Lastly, JDAP will work with MCDSS and EFAS administration, leadership, and management to assess/and or measure CalWORKs improvement in quality of life of children, youth, families, and communities. JDAP will examine each action step to identify program strategies and action steps that could be replicated.

Goal 2: Decrease Sanction Rate to 30% from 32%. Review using Cal-OAR Data Dashboard improving by 1.0% every 12 months within 2 years (for a total of a 2.0% improvement).

Strategy 1: *Decrease the number of WTW participants going into sanction.*

Strategy 2: *Improve and/or refine outreach to pre-sanctioned and sanctioned WTW participants.*

Strategy 3: *Heighten ESR focus on engaged participants not meeting required hours to encourage incremental increase of hours monthly to progress toward meeting participation requirements.*

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

Mendocino County identified sanction rates as a performance measure for improvement based on the rate of sanction compared to State. Although Mendocino utilized many flexibilities offered in 2020, including use of phone interviews and additional opportunities to engage, this still remains an opportunity for improvement.

"Participants in non-compliance" was cited during the Cal-CSA as area that should be addressed. In interviews with directors of community-based organizations, the county found that many organizations believed that participants may not fully understand consequences of not engaging in WTW activities during early stages of the program. Interviewees suggested that the higher sanction rate may be associated with ETW/participant communications. For example, WTW has experienced staffing shortages and turnover which could have impacted the thoroughness in explaining WTW expectations and benefits--due to inexperience of staff combined with higher workloads. Mendocino County has discussed policy changes that would permit additional review of potential barriers and steps to ensure that all possible resources are examined for each unique situation. The County will also be looking at implementing increased time for participants to demonstrate improved engagement prior to discussion of non-compliance.

2. What led the CWD to these improvement strategies?

Focus groups with WTW staff and CPCs indicated clients are sometimes overwhelmed with the amount of paperwork that is required and/or the amount of paperwork that participants need to understand. ETWs have different presentation styles of WTW program information and requirements. The WTW participant case type may also have an influence on fulfilling program requirements and activities. For example, a single parent/caregiver case type may complete program hours more easily than a two-parent case type which must negotiate how hours should be divided for WTW activities.

During the Cal-CSA, stakeholders expressed concern that the community seems to have a limited access to services to address the diverse needs of WTW participants with multiple barriers to employment and education. County has contracted with several providers with the intent to enhance opportunities to support low-resource families. The WTW program has been working with department leadership and county administration to increase the number of service providers available to WTW participants.

In focus groups and interview it was noted that there is a need by WTW staff, management, and supervisors to look at additional strategies to assist participants in avoiding non-compliance.

3. Discuss any research or literature that supports the strategies chosen. Cite reference.

A systematic review of past research found sanctioning WTW participants seemed like a very promising social welfare motivation approach, with a few evaluations of studies showing initiatives aimed at longer-term TANF dependency. M (Domenico. 2002). Thus, in considering Cal-OAR performance measures, the CWD analyzed information from numerous CPCs to consider environmental factors that may have an influence on engagement and sanction rates.

References:

Barnes, Caryl Y. and Henly, Julia R (2010). "They Are Underpaid and Understaffed": How Clients Interpret Encounters with Street-Level Bureaucrats. Retrieved July 8, 2022.

<https://academic.oup.com/jpart/article/28/2/165/4885362>

Broughton, Chad (2010). Bringing the Organization Back In: The Role of Bureaucratic Churning in Early TANF Caseload Declines in Illinois. Retrieved September 23, 2022.

<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol37/iss3/9/>

Parisi, Domenico (2002). [TANF/Welfare Client Decline and Community Context in the Rural South, 1997-2000](#). Retrieved September 23, 2022.

4. Describe the roles of other partners and collaborators in implementing the strategies.

CPCs have played a key role in assisting in independently evaluating and assessing the level of success of steps implemented, to support identifying performance measures and bringing forth vulnerable family experiences with the CWD. CPCs are helping JDAP assess data driven WTW engagement and sanctioning to complete CQI projects and measure the effectiveness of WTW activities and services. CPCs have been supportive of CalWORKs and potentially take a leading role in efforts to achieve positive results and outcomes that work toward WTW participants' economic, psychological, and social self-sufficiency. Through the Cal-CSA, the CWD and CPCs increased community and

program engagement with WTW staff and strengthened already existing partnerships among groups and governmental organizations.

JDAP will continue to work with CPCs on data-driven projects and initiatives, providing avenues to inform CWD leadership, management, and staff, for increased understanding of WTW participant experiences with program and services across community organizations to improve selected and future performance measures.

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

Training on data collection, presentation, and analysis will be provided to WTW staff. ETWs will continue to receive CJS quarterly training which provides additional information on CalWORKs and WTW services, and CDSS updates to ETWs. This change in practice will allow ETWs to retain more training materials and provide more customer support with ongoing refresher in their knowledge base of case management. During the Cal-CSA, it was recommended to reestablish group orientation as a way of engaging WTW participants sooner. WTW staff will receive ongoing training to improve orientations with an emphasis on group orientation.

WTW staff also recommended maintaining cross-training opportunities that not only benefit WTW participants but CalWORKs staff with opportunities for growth, increased wages, and professional development.

Lastly, on the technical side, JDAP will seek CDSS support products and services to help the CWD implement Cal-OAR, especially assistance in assessing metric, benchmarks, and performance measures.

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

Several barriers exist within the county which may influence Cal-SIP goal achievement in engagement rates. A major barrier to achieving the goals of the Cal-SIP is CalWORKs staff. A second barrier to goal achievement of the Cal-SIP is community resources. Mendocino County is currently working on budget issues and trying to mitigate service disruption through consolidation or reducing the building footprint of the county. As the US economy moves to increase the availability of green and service sector jobs, low-wages and pay may persist in Mendocino County. The county's minimum wage was established as \$17.42 for some positions with the county in 2022.

The CWD plans to mitigate barriers by continuing to do outreach to hire more staff. WTW supervisors and management will continue to work with JDAP to incorporate data-driven strategies and practices into WTW program and services for improvement. The CWD intends to improve upon outreach and communication to WTW participants initially and CPCs with monthly program and service updates. The WTW will continue to have monthly and quarterly trainings and cross-training presented by the Senior

Program Specialist. The County is working steadfast with vendors to bring more high-speed internet services to residents as noted in its 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. WTW continuously promotes training to WTW staff such as case management and in-house lateral transfers. Using CQI techniques, CJS works with CPCs on improving community partner referrals for service and programs. WTW also is working diligently to have WTW participants utilizing the Expanded Subsidized Employment program. The CWD is also committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the department. For example, CWD has a DEI officer and staff meet regularly to discuss issues of biases and inclusion. Lastly, WTW uses its Family Stabilization Program to help families address personal and environmental barriers.

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's CalWORKs Job Services Unit (CJS) JDAP will primarily take the lead in assessing and/or evaluating the implementation of the Cal-CQI processes. JDAP was specifically created during this 2021-2026 Cal-CQI cycle to assist with implementation of Cal-OAR using TANF and CalWORKs evidence based, evidence informed, best practices, and promising practices. Within the EFAS Division, JDAP will be guided by a Deputy Director, Senior Program Manager (CalWORKs Job Services) and Program Manager (CalWORKs eligibility).

In understanding its context, JDAP will use a five-tier framework of program evaluation that purposefully incorporates review within organizations that have a limited budget or no budget for this purpose.

First, JDAP will revisit the Cal-CSA to fully understand challenges, issues, and opportunities for improvements related to rates of ongoing engagement and sanctions. For example, in reinstituting group orientations to improve WTW engagement and reduce sanctions, JDAP will interview and/or survey WTW participants, WTW staff, and CPCs to gather data on their experiences with WTW.

Secondly, actions steps will be monitored for accountability quarterly with CPCs, CDSS, CCOT, MCCOART, and WTW staff. During this tier, JDAP will meet quarterly with stakeholder groups and provide an update on the status of each action step and strategy. JDAP will continuously attempt to use aggregated and disaggregated data to ensure WTW is serving intended participants as proposed by actions steps under engagement and sanction goals.

Thirdly, as part of the five-tier approach, quality review and clarification components will be used by JDAP along with the Plan-Study-Do-Act model. In completing the Cal-CSA, JDAP proactively conducted community outreach that was appreciated by CPCs as noted earlier in invitations that JDAP received to attend CPC meetings. The Cal-OAR

outreach will continue to provide WTW staff, participants, and others with information regarding WTW Cal-SIP action steps achievement or modifications.

Fourth, JDAP will work with CCOT and MCCOART to address design issues and data analysis steps to evaluate if action steps have been achieved. JDAP will examine and monitor action step results to work toward improvement of identified process outcomes as posted on the Cal-OAR Data Dashboard.

Lastly, JDAP will work with MCDSS and EFAS administration, leadership, and management to assess/and or measure CalWORKs improvement in the quality of life of children, youth, families, and communities. JDAP will examine each action step to identify program strategies and steps that could be replicated.

Section 2: Peer Review

Peer county/ counties selected for collaboration and consultation:

Humboldt

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

The peer review process has positively impacted MCDSS's Cal-SIP development and potential implementation. The Cal-SIP peer reviews, which took place on October 23-24, 2023, brought together CalWORKs/WTW program managers, analysts, and support staff from both counties to learn from each other, discuss best/promising practices, and share new WTW innovations in the field. Examples of activities included looking at process flow to reduce paperwork provided to WTW participants to improve time management for working and newly employed parents, helping to build trust with clients and increasing the ongoing engagement rate. Further, this allowed for CWD to gain knowledge and potential technical assistance from Humboldt WTW program, which also has several federally recognized tribes. No challenges presented themselves for Humboldt and Mendocino counties CalWORKs/WTW programs. Indeed, with both counties sharing a county line, it was easy working with our adjacent colleagues as many shared fond memories of working with each other on previous CDSS projects and initiatives to improve the lives of CalWORKs/WTW customers over the years. As mentioned above, notable insights were gained during the peer review regarding Humboldt's relationships with its Native American tribes, which Mendocino saw as a very valuable practice to improve ongoing engage and sanction rates.

2. Discuss steps taken to conduct peer review.

Before submission of the Cal-CSA, Mendocino reached out to our peer partner Humboldt County to schedule brief meetings to go over logistics to completing the peer review. Mendocino and Humboldt held all meetings virtually for the convenience of the county participants, Introductions were conducted at the peer review kick-off meeting, at which we established meeting format and frequency moving forward. Mendocino's Cal-OAR program lead met with Humboldt staff to provide research and insights to county practices and data and Humboldt County shared their draft Cal-SIP and Cal-CSA documents. We had several meetings leading up to the Cal-SIP peer review in October. Prior to each meeting, both counties used the framework of the Peer Review Toolkit to prepare agenda, send draft Cal-CSA and Cal-SIP for review. Each county developed an agenda based on the example given by CDSS in the Peer Review Toolkit. Humboldt hosted the first meeting and walked Mendocino through the peer review process and data, which Mendocino followed the next day in the position of host.

Humboldt County was selected as our peer review county for several reasons. First, the proximity of Humboldt to Mendocino allowed previous relations to remain intact from

other projects. Second, Mendocino and Humboldt share many of the same geographic, climate, and demographic characteristics, including a similar percentage of our respective populations engaged in the labor force. Finally, the similar rural and agricultural economies of the counties along with shared coastlines, community activities, and cultural communities made for a great collaboration in completing the peer reviews.

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

In having Humboldt as a peer review county, the importance of improving Mendocino's ongoing engagement and sanction rates for low-resource families became even more evident at a county and regional level. We did identify several government processes and cultural initiatives that may result in continuous quality improvement efforts to serve vulnerable families in going forward. Humboldt suggested improvements in our processes in supporting Native Americans and Hispanic/Latino populations. As a result, Mendocino County will incorporate attendance of cultural events for marginalized populations within the county as countable activities for participants. We were able to review a sample MOU that Humboldt County uses with community partners to facilitate associated service referrals. Additionally, feedback was provided from our peer county regarding group orientations and the way orientations in general could be delivered to improve outcomes for WTW participants. In sum, there is no question that going the Cal-SIP peer review process with Humboldt was an essential component of our continuous quality improvement efforts under Cal-OAR help CalWORKs recipients and WTW participants achieve social, economic, and psychological form of self-sufficiency.

Section 3: Target Measure Summary

Goal 1: Increase Engagement Rate to 66% from 64%. Review using Cal-OAR Data Dashboard improving by 1.0% every 12 months within 2 years (for a total of a 2.0% improvement).

Performance Measure: Engagement Rate

Baseline Result: 64%

**Cal-SIP Start
Time:** 5/1/2024

Progress Report #1:
5/9/2025

Progress Report #2:
6/12/2026

Cycle End Date:
6/30/2026

Strategies, Action Steps, and Tracking Improvement:

Strategy 1: Maximizing early engagement opportunities with WTW participants.

Action Steps:

- Reinstitute the practice of WTW group orientation while maintaining virtual and phone accessibility.
- Train ETW staff to facilitate orientations to ensure consistency of information provided to participants.
- Allow additional opportunities for participants to attend orientation to reduce initial barriers.

Strategy 2: Expand access to the activities available for WTW participants.

Action Steps:

- Support alternative service delivery methods to WTW participants by providers.
- Increase number of service provider locations within the county.
- Partner with local organizations to advocate for a regional approach to address disparities in remote locations of county.

Strategy 3: Increase tribal outreach for meaningful collaboration regarding Native American participants and cultural activity involvement that can be applied to WTW participation hours.

Action Steps:

- Establish tribal contacts and routine communication to provide an ongoing collaboration with tribal resources.

- Identify established culturally specific activities that align with the Job Readiness activity category.
- Add culturally specific activities when identified to Job Readiness options available in SAWS.

Tracking Improvement:

JDAP will primarily take the lead in assessing and/or evaluating the implementation of the Cal-CQI processes. JDAP was formed during this 2021-2026 Cal-CQI cycle to assist with implementation of Cal-OAR using TANF and CalWORKs evidence based, evidence informed, best practices, and promising practices. Within the EFAS Division, JDAP will be guided by a Deputy Director, Senior Program Manager (CalWORKs job services) and Program Manager (CalWORKs eligibility). Additionally, JDAP will be supported by a Senior Program Specialist and Program Specialist I/II within CJS.

In understanding its context, JDAP will use a five-tier framework of program evaluation that purposefully incorporates program evaluations within organizations that have a limited budget or no budget for program evaluation.

First, JDAP will revisit the Cal-CSA to fully understand challenges, issues, and opportunities for Cal-WORKs improvements related to rates of ongoing engagement and sanctions. For example, in employing group orientations to improve WTW engagement and reduce sanctions, JDAP will interview and/or survey WTW participants, WTW staff, and CPCs to gather data on their experiences with WTW.

Secondly, actions steps will be monitored for accountability quarterly with CPCs, CDSS, CCOT, MCOART, and WTW staff. During this tier, JDAP will meet quarterly with stakeholder groups and provide an update on the status of each action step and strategy. JDAP will continuously attempt to use aggregated and disaggregated data to ensure WTW is serving intended participants as proposed by actions steps under engagement and sanction goals.

Thirdly, as a part of the five-tier approach, quality review and clarification components will be used by JDAP along with the Plan-Study-Do-Act model. In completing the Cal-CSA, JDAP proactively conducted community outreach that was appreciated by CPCs as noted earlier in invitations that JDAP received to attend CPC meetings. The Cal-OAR outreach will continue to provide WTW staff, participants, and others with information regarding WTW Cal-SIP action steps achievement or modifications.

Fourth, JDAP will work with CCOT and MCOART to address design issues and data analysis steps to see if action steps have been achieved. JDAP will examine action steps to monitor if action steps help improve identified process outcomes as posted on the Cal-OAR Data Dashboard.

Lastly, JDAP will work with MCDSS and EFAS administration, leadership, and management to assess/and or measure CalWORKs improvement in quality of life of children, youth, families, and communities. JDAP will examine each action step to identify program strategies and action steps that could be replicated.

Goal 2: Decrease Sanction Rate to 30% from 32%. Review using Cal-OAR Data Dashboard improving by 1.0% every 12 months within 2 years (for a total of a 2.0% improvement).

Performance Measure: Sanction Rate

Baseline Result: 32%

Cal-SIP Start Time: 5/1/2024	Progress Report #1: 5/9/2025	Progress Report #2: 6/12/2026	Cycle End Date: 6/30/2026
--	--	---	-------------------------------------

Strategies, Action Steps, and Tracking Improvement:

Strategy 1: Decrease the number of WTW participants going into sanction.

Action Steps:

- Increase effort to identify possible alternatives to address participation barriers (i.e., Family Stabilization, good cause, or exemptions).
- Consider all possibilities prior to WTW sanction by having the ETWs work with supervisors to ensure consideration of all resources and options.
- Institute monthly discussion and sharing of worker experiences to develop best practices.
- Increase collaboration with community partners working with WTW participants, to incorporate CalWORKs 2.0 and a holistic approach into activities provided.

Strategy 2: Improve and/or refine outreach to pre-sanctioned and sanctioned WTW participants.

Action Steps:

- Increase attempts to contact sanctioned individuals by assigned worker in the first 30 days of sanction.
- Provide quarterly letter to sanctioned individuals, informing of benefits of WTW participation and steps to initiate re-engagement.
- Review case when income added to identify newly employed and follow up with direct outreach to those sanctioned individuals to discuss support and services available to them.

Strategy 3: Heighten ESR focus on engaged participants not meeting required hours to encourage incremental increase of hours monthly to progress toward meeting participation requirements.

Action Steps:

- Implement formal response from ETW when participant fails to meet assigned hours in a month; conversation with participant to include identification of barriers and strategies to increase engagement.
- Monitor for increased participation for two to three months to allow time to establish a routine and make adjustments as needed.
- Consultation with ETW supervisor when it is determined progress is stagnant to ensure individual has been given adequate opportunity to address the lack of participation.

Strategy 4: Incorporate customized outreach to the Native American population of WTW sanctioned participants.

Action Steps:

- Identification of Native Americans in the WTW sanction caseload requiring specialized outreach.
- Revision of sanction outreach letter to be used specifically with Native American population which will include newly identified cultural activities that become available.
- Track and monitor Native American outreach efforts to identify trends with engagement and participation in the newly identified activities.
- Evaluate and apply identified practices to maximize effectiveness of outreach efforts.

Tracking Improvement:

The CWD's CalWORKs Job Services Unit (CJS) JDAP will primarily take the lead in assessing and/or evaluating the implementation of the Cal-CQI processes. JDAP was specifically created during this 2021-2026 Cal-CQI cycle to assist with implementation of Cal-OAR using TANF and CalWORKs evidence based, evidence informed, best practices, and promising practices. Within the EFAS Division, JDAP will be guided by a Deputy Director, Senior Program Manager (CalWORKs Job Services) and Program Manager (CalWORKs eligibility).

In understanding its context, JDAP will use a five-tier framework of program evaluation that purposefully incorporates review within organizations that have a limited budget or no budget for this purpose.

First, JDAP will revisit the Cal-CSA to fully understand challenges, issues, and opportunities for improvements related to rates of ongoing engagement and sanctions. For example, in reinstituting group orientations to improve WTW engagement and

reduce sanctions, JDAP will interview and/or survey WTW participants, WTW staff, and CPCs to gather data on their experiences with WTW.

Secondly, actions steps will be monitored for accountability quarterly with CPCs, CDSS, CCOT, MCCOART, and WTW staff. During this tier, JDAP will meet quarterly with stakeholder groups and provide an update on the status of each action step and strategy. JDAP will continuously attempt to use aggregated and disaggregated data to ensure WTW is serving intended participants as proposed by actions steps under engagement and sanction goals.

Thirdly, as part of the five-tier approach, quality review and clarification components will be used by JDAP along with the Plan-Study-Do-Act model. In completing the Cal-CSA, JDAP proactively conducted community outreach that was appreciated by CPCs as noted earlier in invitations that JDAP received to attend CPC meetings. The Cal-OAR outreach will continue to provide WTW staff, participants, and others with information regarding WTW Cal-SIP action steps achievement or modifications.

Fourth, JDAP will work with CCOT and MCCOART to address design issues and data analysis steps to evaluate if action steps have been achieved. JDAP will examine and monitor action step results to work toward improvement of identified process outcomes as posted on the Cal-OAR Data Dashboard.

Lastly, JDAP will work with MCDSS and EFAS administration, leadership, and management to assess/and or measure CalWORKs improvement in the quality of life of children, youth, families, and communities. JDAP will examine each action step to identify program strategies and steps that could be replicated.