

# **LINKAGES**

## **Planning Guide**



Developed by  
**Kate Karpilow, Ph.D.**  
California Center for Research on Women and Families

**October 2005**

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California Center for Research on Women and Families  
**October 2005**



Dear Colleagues:

October 27, 2005

The *Linkages Planning Guide* culminates five years of dedicated effort by county, state and nonprofit leaders who collaborated during the first phase of the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project. What a journey!

The overriding goal that has united us has been our desire to help families involved in both CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services become self-sufficient and provide safe environments for their children.

We started from a simple observation: Families in crisis are not well served when faced with two service delivery systems, two sets of workers, two case plans, and sometimes conflicting goals and requirements.

For families involved in both CalWORKs and CWS, we learned that Linkages services can reduce the burdens of bureaucracy and heighten opportunities for success. Today, we know that when we work *together*, we work more effectively to help families succeed.

**The goal of the *Linkages Planning Guide* is to share the philosophy of Linkages – and to provide county leaders throughout and beyond California with information about the specific *approaches and tools* that can help them plan and implement Linkages in their own communities.** We do this by showcasing the incredible work of county leaders from the 13 Pioneer Counties who participated in the first phase of the Partnership Project.

The journey of the past five years would not have been possible without the support of the Stuart Foundation, which made a major philosophical and financial commitment to fund this multi-year initiative. Thanks especially to Pat Reynolds-Harris, former Program Officer, who launched the program, and Teri Kook, current Program Officer, who continued that support. Thanks also to leaders from the California Department of Social Services, the Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice, the Zellerbach Family Foundation, and the Central California Training Academy.

A special note of appreciation goes to the many county leaders who, despite the competing demands of downsized budgets, growing caseloads, and other initiatives, participated in months of work groups and led the way for two years as grantee counties. All of these leaders have been dedicated and delightful colleagues, and they have given real meaning to the name of our initiative, the “Partnership Project.”

Such a sustained effort would not have been possible without the commitment of a superlative group of professionals who provided outstanding training and technical assistance, and always cheered on the work of the Linkages counties. My profound thanks to Linda Orrante, Project Coordinator from the start of the Project through September 2004; Sarah Boehm, Coordinator of the Outcomes Project; and Alix Barbey, Research Assistant. Leslie Ann Hay of Hay Consulting also has our considerable thanks for her many contributions, as does Professor Jill Duerr Berrick and her team of evaluators.

The release of the *Linkages Planning Guide* marks the completion of the work from the first phase of the Partnership Project. Phase Two of the Partnership Project and beyond is under the direction of the **Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC)**, an affiliate of the County Welfare Directors Association. We wish them well and thank them for taking on this important work.

We hope that you find the *Linkages Planning Guide* to be of value, and we once again thank our many partners – not only for their leadership, but also for their commitment to the families they serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kate Karpilow'.

Kate Karpilow, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
CCRWF

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**Dedicated to the Linkages Coordinators  
in the 13 Pioneer Counties –  
leaders who dreamed new directions,  
broke down barriers,  
managed up, down, and sideways,  
produced more protocols than humanly possible –  
and always, always remembered the families they serve.**

## INTRODUCTION

This *Linkages Planning Guide* gathers into one place the leadership strategies and tested tools of state, county, and nonprofit leaders who worked to re-engineer CalWORKs<sup>1</sup> and Child Welfare Services (CWS) in 13 Pioneer Counties in the State of California.

The four-year effort, known as the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project, was funded by the Stuart Foundation, launched in partnership with the California Department of Social Services, and designed and directed by the California Center for Research on Women and Families (CCRWF). A second phase of the Partnership Project is now underway, directed by the Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC) and providing technical assistance to an additional 17 counties. (See the Appendix for more background information.)

The mission of the Partnership Project, also known as Linkages, has been to translate into practice the twin philosophy laid out by the visionary David Berns, former Director of Human Services in El Paso County, Colorado: that CalWORKs (or TANF) should serve as a child abuse prevention program, and that CWS should work to prevent poverty. For families involved in both CalWORKs and CWS, coordinated services can reduce the burdens of bureaucracy and can heighten opportunities for success. In the words of leaders from Merced County, Linkages helps “fight poverty and abuse.”

The *Linkages Planning Guide* is intended as a roadmap for county leaders making the decision whether or not to launch Linkages and as a resource for leaders in the 30 counties already implementing Linkages. To expedite the planning and implementation of Linkages programs – and to enhance the likelihood that Linkages will be sustained over time, the Guide describes the field-tested Linkages Work Plan Process which can help county leaders make decisions about *policy, practice and administration* – the three Linkages Building Blocks.

In many counties throughout California, Linkages has become “not a project, but a way of doing business,” an approach to serving families that puts their needs first. This Planning Guide provides specific guidance and tools to *change the service system*; its fundamental purpose is to help county leaders provide the best possible services to families.

**The *Linkages Planning Guide* is intended as a roadmap for county leaders making the decision whether or not to launch Linkages and as a resource for leaders in the 30 counties already implementing Linkages.**

***A Linkages client . . . talks about Linkages  
from the Linkages Training Video***

**“Overall, I don’t know if anything else could have worked for me. If these people wouldn’t have done it the way they did it . . . (I don’t know) if I would have been clean today . . . if I would have had my kids today . . . if I would have my little one bedroom Victorian apartment and my \$350 car that runs like a dream.**

**I don’t know if I would have had all that.”**

## DECIDING TO LAUNCH LINKAGES

Linkages is distinguished from other coordinated services programs because it focuses on two primary programs – CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services (CWS); it employs a *Work Plan Process* that provides a road map for counties to plan and implement Linkages; and it provides modifiable tools developed and tested by Linkages counties. But most importantly, Linkages is an approach to social services built on an understanding of the impacts of poverty.

Deciding to launch Linkages involves four basic steps:

- Understand the **Twin Philosophy** of Linkages.
- Secure **Leadership** commitment to support Linkages from start to finish.
- Commit to the Linkages **Building Blocks**.
- Endorse the Linkages **Work Plan Process**.

### Understand the Twin Philosophy of Linkages

The Linkages philosophy can be succinctly summarized: **Through improved coordination, Child Welfare Services can serve as an anti-poverty program; and CalWORKs can help prevent child abuse and neglect.**

A study from the United States Department of Health and Human Services found that children from families with annual incomes below \$15,000, as compared to children from families with annual incomes above \$30,000, were more than 22 times likely to experience some form of maltreatment.<sup>2</sup> Due to the frequent co-occurrence of poverty and abuse or neglect, it is not surprising that many welfare and child welfare agencies have clients in common.<sup>3,4</sup>

In addition to struggling with poverty and the possible or actual removal of their children, families in both systems must navigate two bureaucracies that often impose conflicting requirements, goals, and timeframes. In many cases, a county's welfare and child welfare services are

**“Linkages is designed to assist families in crisis, particularly those dealing with the stresses and strains of poverty. It helps counties create partnerships across child welfare and welfare to reduce bureaucracy, coordinate services for families, and promote better outcomes. Linkages puts parenting first.”**

**Jill Duerr Berrick, Ph.D.  
Co-Director,  
Center for Child and Youth  
Policy,  
and Professor  
School of Social Welfare  
U.C. Berkeley**

provided in different locations, which creates scheduling and transportation challenges. Clients typically go through separate and lengthy screening processes, yet answer many of the same questions for each program. Clients must also negotiate with two different service systems that do not communicate with each other.<sup>5</sup>

*Workers themselves face frustrations when serving clients involved in both systems.* Parents miss appointments because of scheduling conflicts and are highly stressed trying to meet the demands and requirements of two case plans. Moreover, Child Welfare workers often are not given the authority or resources to provide child care, transportation, housing and other poverty mitigations that can help create a safe and stable environment for the family – resources that CalWORKs can provide. CalWORKs workers typically do not have the authority or resources to provide voluntary Family Maintenance services that can strengthen family interactions and help a client enter the job market – resources available through CWS.

Without coordination, the different approaches of CWS and CalWORKs can jeopardize the likelihood of a client succeeding in either program. The alternative is to reconfigure the service system to help workers collaborate to help families. That is the purpose of Linkages.

Before launching Linkages, it is important for county leaders to recognize that it is not just another methodology to coordinate services – it is built on an understanding of the interaction between poverty and maltreatment.

**“Linkages helps people who work in counties break down the bureaucratic boundaries that limit services to families. We not only partner to help families resolve crises, we coordinate services to prevent poverty and abuse.”**

**Ray Gallagher  
Linkages Co-Coordinator  
Orange County**

**FIGURE 1**  
**BENEFITS OF LINKAGES**

***For the families***

- Coordinating services and providing quicker access to services can yield better outcomes for families because they don't have competing plans, goals, and timelines.
- A single point of entry for families to access multiple service systems makes life easier for families who already have significant stress and few resources.
- Improved screening and assessment means that prevention services can be added, expanded, or offered earlier.
- A coordinated system can establish more accountability. There is less opportunity for miscommunication between families and staff.
- Families reduce the amount of time spent with program administration and increase the time spent in applying the skills learned.
- For families with domestic violence, mental health issues, alcohol and drug abuse, and other barriers to self-sufficiency, Linkages can facilitate access to a broad array of coordinated services.

***For the county***

- Coordination of services can mean better and more efficient use of existing resources – funding, staff, and time.
- Cost savings may result from reducing duplicate services, improving client outcomes, and reducing recidivism.
- Staff serving the same families will have a common purpose and a stronger sense of community because separations between programs will be reduced.
- Staff feels more knowledgeable, effective, and empowered; better morale among staff also helps with retention and recruitment.
- Coordination of programs may mean that the county can more effectively implement statutes and regulations.

## **Confirm Leadership Commitment**

Before the county commits to coordinating CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services, county leaders need to assess if they can fully commit to the undertaking. They need to evaluate the work involved to plan and implement the program, the changes in staff practice, and the benefits for client families and county workers (see Figure 1 on the previous page). The informed commitment of the Director of the county's Social Services Agency is essential to the success of Linkages.

*Note that a reflective process is recommended.* For many counties, Linkages will be a valuable approach to better serve families. However, for some counties, it might be the wrong time to plan and commit to Linkages. Far too many pilot projects begin and are never expanded countywide.

While it is strategic to launch Linkages at a pilot site to assess if planned approaches and protocols fit the county's needs and culture, *leadership* is necessary to ensure that piloted Linkages services become available countywide.

In short, for Linkages to be successful, sustained leadership is fundamental. The top leadership of the county's social services system – the County Welfare Director *or* a strong Deputy Director – must be willing to spend time, brain power, and possibly even political capital to establish a vision, create a common mission, and retool administrative and service delivery systems.

**"From being involved with the development of the mission, to really believing families benefit from linked services, to ensuring that the Department's organizational structure and policies are aligned – *leadership is the key.*"**

**Debby Jeter  
Deputy Director  
Department of Social Services  
San Luis Obispo County**

## Commit to the Linkages Building Blocks

The county constructs Linkages using three *building blocks*: Policy Foundation, Practice Protocols, and Administration.<sup>6</sup> As county leaders assess the “fit” of Linkages to their county’s needs, it is important to understand the purpose of each building block and how they can be implemented through the Work Plan Process.



More detail is provided for each building block in the following sections. However, counties typically begin by establishing the ***Policy Foundation***, which includes drafting a vision, mission and guiding principles. They choose a priority target population, as well as a model process for coordinating case plans between CWS and CalWORKs. Early discussion of expected outcomes is important, as this aligns the Linkages target population and practices with expected results.

Once the policy decisions have been made, counties focus on the second Linkages Building Block, ***Practice Protocols***. Counties determine how to identify clients in the target population, set up processes for sharing information about prospective and actual clients, and establish written protocols for coordinated case planning.

Throughout the development of the policy foundation and the practice tools, counties also focus on the third Linkages Building Block, ***Administration***, developing tools to help plan, implement, and evaluate Linkages. As soon as the county’s leadership decides to launch Linkages, a Planning Committee is established, and a Linkages Coordinator is appointed to facilitate planning and implementation. A Basic Orientation is organized to introduce staff to the philosophy and practice of Linkages. Finance staff identify methods to braid existing funding and maximize matching opportunities through Title IV-E. Ongoing training is developed to assist staff with coordinated case planning, supervising in a coordinated services environment, and other topics. Evaluation staff determine how to extract Linkages outcomes from evaluation efforts already underway.

## **Endorse the Linkages Work Plan Process**

By using the Linkages Work Plan Process, the county can be certain to cover all of the essential building blocks to plan, implement and sustain their Linkages program, while at the same time benefiting from the strategies developed by the Pioneer Counties. The Linkages Work Plan is the central tool to develop Linkages.

The Linkages Work Plan is organized around the three Linkages Building Blocks: Policy Foundation, Practice Protocols, and Administration. Within each of these sections, the county will focus on several Topic Areas (see Figure 2 on next page) and develop goals, objectives, tasks and expected products.

The Linkages Work Plan Process offers specific planning tools. For example, counties modify the products, objectives and tasks in a **Sample Plan** to fit their own goals for Linkages. A **Planning Worksheet** provides instructions on how to develop the work plan. A blank **Work Plan Template** provides the form for the Planning Committee to set objectives, determine tasks, and identify products. An informal **Linkages Assessment Tool** is available to evaluate the county's capacity and readiness to undertake Linkages. Each of these tools is described in more detail in the Administration section.

Endorsing and adopting the Linkages Work Plan Process allows the county's leadership and staff to expeditiously plan and implement a Linkages program that fits the needs of the county's families, staff and agencies.

**“The work plan served as our road map in planning and implementation. It helped us focus on the steps to be taken in an organized manner. It made our planning easier because we knew what the next steps were and the target date to accomplish our tasks. Including stakeholders in the development of the plan and using a team approach contributed in the smooth implementation of the plan.”**

**Nenita Dean  
Linkages Coordinator  
Stanislaus County**

**FIGURE 2**  
**LINKAGES WORK PLAN:**  
**BUILDING BLOCKS & TOPIC AREAS**

**POLICY FOUNDATION**

- **Strategic Direction** – the vision, mission, and guiding principles that reflect the Linkages philosophy and shape a county’s Linkages effort.
- **Target Population** – the specific group(s) of clients to be served through coordination of CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services.
- **Coordinated Case Planning Model** – the most appropriate coordinated case planning model to use in a county’s Linkages effort, given the agency’s organizational structure.
- **Outcomes** – the desired client and program outcomes that will indicate success for the Linkages effort.

**PRACTICE PROTOCOLS**

- **Client Identification** – the procedures and tools for identifying and screening clients who are members of the target population(s).
- **Information Sharing** – the process and protocols for respectful sharing of information between CalWORKs and Child Welfare for the purpose of enhanced service coordination. May include modifications to a county’s confidentiality policy.
- **Coordinated Case Planning Protocols** – the procedures and tools necessary to carry out effective coordinated case planning between CalWORKs and Child Welfare.

**ADMINISTRATION**

- **Project Management** – the work planning, staffing, and reporting tools to keep Linkages on track.
- **Staff Training** – the education, training, and technical assistance used to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of CalWORKs and Child Welfare staff and management to successfully implement Linkages.
- **Funding** – the resources to implement and sustain Linkages.
- **Evaluation** – the method of tracking and analyzing client outcome data and other factors to determine Linkages results and make program improvements.

## **MOVING AHEAD: HOW TO BUILD LINKAGES**

Once the county has made the decision to move forward, Linkages is constructed using the Linkages Building Blocks: Policy Foundation, Practice Protocols, and Administration. The Linkages Work Plan Process assists counties in setting goals and objectives to plan and implement Linkages.

The remainder of this Planning Guide provides a more detailed overview of each Linkages Building Block and profiles specific tools and materials that can be adapted to create a new Linkages program.<sup>7</sup>

In each subsequent section of the Planning Guide, Linkages planning tools are highlighted in dotted boxes. To access a copy of each tool, go to the on-line version of the Guide, available at [www.cfpic.org](http://www.cfpic.org). Documents can be accessed through electronic links. A complete list of Linkages tools is compiled in the Appendix.

### **LINKAGES TOOL BOX**

**In each subsequent section of the Planning Guide, Linkages planning tools are highlighted in dotted boxes. To access a copy of each tool, go to the on-line version of the Guide, available at [www.cfpic.org](http://www.cfpic.org). Documents can be accessed through electronic links. A complete list of Linkages tools is compiled in the Appendix.**

## **BUILDING BLOCK #1: POLICY FOUNDATION**

Establishing the policy foundation for Linkages guides changes in service delivery and administrative practices. The Linkages Policy Foundation has four steps:

- Establish a strategic direction.
- Choose a target population.
- Select a coordinated case planning model.
- Identify expected client outcomes.



While discussions among leadership and the Planning Committee need to be thorough to develop some level of consensus about the direction, values, goals and structures needed to support Linkages, it also important that planning be time limited. Most Pioneer Counties launched their pilot projects within six months – and avoided *analysis paralysis*.

As discussed earlier, pilot projects are a practical first step – they allow policy decisions to be tested and fine-tuned through actual practice. Modifications of initial plans are to be expected and encouraged before the county expands the pilot project throughout the county.

**"During the Linkages planning stage we got together to answer the questions: Who do you want to serve? Why do you want to serve? How do you want to serve? This process brought clarity and focus to our Linkages efforts."**

**Tomy Joseph  
Linkages Coordinator  
San Francisco County**

## Establish a Strategic Direction

Linkages typically represents a shift in agency philosophy, and it is important for the county's leadership and the Linkages Planning Committee to discuss and agree upon their rationale for coordinating CalWORKs and CWS, including expectations for clients, families, management, staff, the agency, and community partners.

The Partnership Project's work groups recommended that *four values* anchor and guide Linkages: Service delivery should be *family focused, needs driven, community connected, and strengths based*.

**To ensure that there is consensus about the strategic direction and to enable future training about the purpose of Linkages, final decisions about strategic direction need to be summarized into three written documents:**

- **vision statement,**
- **mission statement, and**
- **guiding principles.**

Some Pioneer Counties also developed compelling slogans or mottos to summarize their Linkages vision and help clients, county staff, and community partners understand the purpose of their work. Figure 3 on the next page presents the vision, mission, and guiding principles of Yolo County. Additional samples of these documents can be found on-line. Discussion questions are also available to guide a Planning Committee's development of their vision, mission, and guiding principles.

**"Our mission statement is far more than a slogan.  
It defines us. It's our battle cry. We developed it together;  
we believe in it; we live it:  
'We fight poverty and abuse.'"**

**Ana Pagan, Director  
Merced County Human Services Agency**

### **Linkages Planning Tools: Strategic Direction**

**available on-line at  
[www.cfpic.org](http://www.cfpic.org)**

Examples of Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles (VMGP)

Mendocino County, CA  
San Luis Obispo County, CA  
Tehama County, CA  
Yolo County, CA

El Paso County, Colorado

Questions to Guide Planning Committee Discussion of VMGP

The Four Linkages Values

PowerPoint Presentations on Strategic Direction

Merced County  
San Luis Obispo County

**FIGURE 3**  
**VISION, MISSION, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICES**  
**YOLO COUNTY**

**Vision**

**Children are entitled to live in a safe and healthy environment  
with families that are stable and self-sufficient.**

**Mission**

**To coordinate services for cross-over families through more  
realistic “family” case plans  
that can allow families to achieve success.**

**Guiding Principles**

**Using a team approach for case management  
services based on common ground and that supports:**

- **A holistic perspective for families;**
- **A simplified process that reduces duplication of efforts;**
- **Collaboration with internal and external partners;**
- **Honors client choice; and**
- **Provides timely services in a respectful manner.**

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## Choose a Target Population

A strength of the Linkages Work Plan Process is that the Planning Committee is asked to identify a specific priority population to receive Linkages services. By focusing attention on the needs of one type of family, decision making becomes real about that target population's needs, their typical points of intersection with county agencies, and the types of staffing and resources available to support them. Once policy and practice decisions are made for one target population, they can be modified to serve another.

### Pioneer Counties

All Pioneer Counties began service delivery with what came to be known as **cross-over** families: those receiving both CalWORKs and CWS Family Maintenance services (both court-ordered and voluntary).

Other target populations served by Pioneer Counties include:

- Families with open cases in CalWORKs and receiving Family Reunification services.
- AB 429 families who have lost CalWORKs payments but continue to receive CalWORKs *services* and who have an open case in child welfare where the child has been removed.
- Families with open cases in CalWORKs with multiple risk factors who are suitable for preventive services to strengthen family stability and prevent entrance into CWS.
- Families in child welfare at risk of entering CalWORKs.
- Diversion families – families in child welfare at risk of entering CalWORKs, but provided one-time welfare services (such as rent, child care) to avoid ongoing enrollment in CalWORKs.

While Figure 4 on the following page maps out many possible target populations for Linkages, the Planning Committee needs to pragmatically determine which target population will be the first to receive Linkages services. Keeping the focus on one target population allows decisions to be made and momentum to develop.

**“We began with one staff person serving one target population, families receiving both CalWORKs and Family Maintenance services. This decision provided the opportunity to define and revise protocols, reduce barriers, and support developing professional relationships. These beginnings provided a positive foundation when we expanded to all staff. Most importantly, we could see almost immediately how it helped the families.”**

**Debbie Powell  
Linkages Coordinator  
Yolo County**

**FIGURE 4  
LINKAGES TARGET POPULATIONS**

<p><b>In CWS but not in CalWORKs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Families in CWS Family Preservation or Family Maintenance who are not in CalWORKs, but may be eligible for CalWORKs, CalWORKs Diversion, Food Stamps, or Medi-Cal Services</li> <li>▪ Teenagers coming out of Foster Care who have children and are eligible for CalWORKs</li> <li>▪ Non-custodial parents of children in CWS who are linked to CalWORKs families through the custodial parent</li> <li>▪ Families with a current CWS Emergency Response investigation that will not be opened as a case</li> </ul>	<p><b>In CWS and in CalWORKs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Families in CalWORKs and receiving CWS voluntary or court-ordered Family Maintenance or Preservation Services</li> <li>▪ Families in CWS Family Reunification services eligible for CalWORKs 180-day employment services</li> <li>▪ Families in CalWORKs with children in Permanent Placement Services</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>Not in CalWORKs</b></p> <p><b>Not in CalWORKs and not in CWS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Families not receiving CalWORKs, but meeting the “needy family” criteria</li> <li>▪ Families not receiving CalWORKs, but receiving prevention services under the auspices of goals 3 and 4 of TANF</li> <li>▪ Families referred for eligibility determination for Medi-Cal, Food Stamps, or Diversion Services</li> <li>▪ Families referred by mandated domestic violence, substance abuse, or mental health reporters</li> </ul>	<p align="center"><b>In CalWORKs</b></p> <p><b>In CalWORKs but not in CWS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Non-needy relatives</li> <li>▪ Families who are in CalWORKs sanction</li> <li>▪ Families who are reaching 60-month time limits</li> <li>▪ Families with no CWS history, but with risk factors such as domestic violence, substance abuse, poor school attendance, and lack of compliance with CalWORKs requirements</li> <li>▪ Families transitioning out of CWS with an ongoing CalWORKs case</li> <li>▪ Families in CalWORKs with prior Child Welfare history, e.g., referrals</li> <li>▪ Teens in CalWORKs, including teen parents</li> <li>▪ Kin-Gap families</li> </ul>

## Select a Coordinated Case Planning Model

To launch Linkages, the Planning Committee needs to determine how to coordinate case planning and case management. All of these activities can be arranged along a continuum from informal to formal, yielding three different models<sup>8</sup> of coordinated case planning (CCP):

- Informal Communication
- Linked Case Plans
- Unified Case Plan

Below are brief descriptions of each CCP model.

### Informal Communication

In this most informal model, CalWORKs and CWS workers understand that both programs are working with the same family. However, there are no formal protocols and implementation depends largely on the interest and motivation of individual workers. No written materials are in place to guarantee that the program will remain after initial implementation.

- Workers in each system are encouraged, but not required, to cross-check to determine if the family has an open case in the other program.
- There are two independently prepared case plans.
- Supervisors encourage staff to discuss their cases with the other program worker as needed.

### Linked Case Plans

CalWORKs and CWS workers have a high level of coordination at the earliest opportunity and throughout the case. The service providers work together with the family to follow through on the family's prioritized service needs and activities.

- Formal protocols require workers to share information between programs when client and family needs are assessed.
- Two case plans are developed.
- Workers coordinate case plan goals, services, and timelines to meet the prioritized needs of the family.
- Case plans include, as appropriate, any treatment plans with substance abuse, mental health, or other service providers.

**Linkages Planning  
Tools:  
Coordinated Case  
Planning Model  
available on-line at  
[www.cfpic.org](http://www.cfpic.org)**

Historical Note on  
Organizational Structures

Partnership Project  
Recommendations from the  
CCP Work Group

**“If the coordinated case planning system isn't formalized, it won't happen. Individual workers may see the benefit and coordinate cases on a case-by-case basis, but if we want to see true linkage between CWS and CalWORKs across the board, we must make the expectation clear and create a formalized system.”**

**Randi Gottlieb  
Phase One Linkages Coordinator  
Tehama County**

- A primary case manager may be assigned.
- Workers from both CalWORKs and CWS meet with the family (e.g., joint home visits) at critical junctures in the assessment, planning, and case implementation phases.
- The workers are required to have regular contact with each other to track the progress of the two case plans.
- Adjustments are made to the case plans as needed.

### Unified Case Plan

Regardless of where and for what reasons the family entered the system, a protocol requires that a single comprehensive case plan address the family’s needs.

- Critical to this model is an accurate, joint/interdisciplinary assessment which identifies and describes the needs of the family.
- There is agreement between the family, the workers, and the service providers on the desired goals and outcomes of the plan, the services to be provided, and what agency will provide the services.
- The workers operate as a team on all aspects of the case from assessment to case resolution.
- In some cases, there is a CWS court case component which, due to privacy, is not shared.
- The unified plan identifies one primary or lead case manager.

Figure 5 below provides a comparison of key features of the different coordinated case planning models.

**FIGURE 5**  
**FEATURES OF DIFFERENT**  
**MODELS OF COORDINATED CASE PLANNING**

	<b>FEATURES OF COORDINATED CASE PLANNING</b>				
<b>MODEL OF COORDINATED CASE PLANNING</b>	<b>Client Identification</b>	<b>Worker Communication</b>	<b>Coordination of Case Plans</b>	<b>Primary or Lead Case Manager</b>	<b>Evaluation of Client’s Progress</b>
<b>INFORMAL COMMUNICATION</b>	Encouraged	Encouraged on as needed basis	Two independently prepared plans; workers encouraged to share	Two different case managers	Workers encouraged to discuss progress
<b>LINKED CASE PLANS</b>	Formal protocol	Required – workers share assessment information and other case information	Two case plans are developed in coordination with each other	A primary case manager may be assigned	Workers required to jointly evaluate progress
<b>UNIFIED CASE PLAN</b>	Formal protocol	Required – from assessment through case resolution	One unified case plan	There is one primary case manager	Workers operate as a team to evaluate progress

## Identify Outcomes for Evaluation

Throughout the country, there is an increased focus on assessing outcomes for clients to determine if social service programs are meeting client needs.

The Partnership Project has developed an Evaluation Guide to help counties evaluate outcomes. Steps include developing a theory of change (expectations of how coordinated services will impact client outcomes), selecting preferred outcomes, and choosing indicators.

### **Linkages Planning Tools: *Outcomes Evaluation***

available on-line at  
[www.cfpic.org](http://www.cfpic.org)

Linkages Evaluation Guide  
See section on Planning.

In order to sustain the Linkages evaluation effort, the approach designed by the Partnership Project does not require additional data collection, but instead depends on information already collected to meet federal (ASFA<sup>9</sup>) and state (AB 636<sup>10</sup>) requirements for outcomes evaluation. At the conclusion of Phase One of the Partnership Project, a few Pioneer Counties were beginning to collect and assess outcomes for Linkages clients.<sup>11</sup>

## Theory of Change

Most Pioneer Counties adopted a similar theory of change, which in turn creates an expectation of certain outcomes and requires the measurement of pre-determined indicators. Shelby McCulley, in Alameda County's *Linkages Program Evaluation Plan*,<sup>12</sup> outlines a theory of change that fits most Linkages projects. Summarized, this theory of change is:

Linkages services (multi-disciplinary team, joint family meetings, coordinated case plan development, ongoing case management) result in case plans that are integrated and adapted to the individual needs of the family. Coordination can also maximize the resources available from CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services and can lead to clients having improved access to services. Clients are therefore more likely to meet their plan requirements and therefore less likely to experience sanctions or experience breaks in aid. With improved access to and coordination of services, clients experience less stress, are at lower risk for child abuse and neglect, and are more likely to achieve family stability and economic self-sufficiency.

## **Outcomes and Indicators**

Most Pioneer Counties selected cross-over families as their priority target population (families in Family Maintenance and CalWORKs). The outcome they are trying to improve is: “Children are first and foremost protected from child abuse and neglect.” The primary indicator being evaluated for that outcome is “recurrence of maltreatment.” (Additional outcomes and indicators can be selected using the Coordinated Services Outcomes Matrix, available in the *Linkages Evaluation Guide*.)

It is important for leadership to ensure that data entry be consistent within the county. For the outcome and indicator identified above, the Partnership Project worked with Linkages counties to develop a protocol for tracking Linkages clients in the Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS) system. Originally pioneered in Merced County, this protocol can be found in Appendix G of the *Linkages Evaluation Guide*.

More information about the administrative process of evaluating outcomes can be found in the section on Administration. Evaluation efforts continue to be refined and expanded during Phase Two of the Partnership Project.

**“It's not really about the data – it's about helping the families. When you know where and why they entered the system, who worked with them, and what their outcomes were, you can do more to make sure your programs are meeting the needs of the people you serve.”**

**David Schilling  
Linkages Coordinator  
Merced County**

## **BUILDING BLOCK #2: PRACTICE PROTOCOLS**

Policy decisions made by the Planning Committee need to be translated into practice protocols. Linkages counties found that the process of specifying *written* protocols accomplished many objectives.



Ideas that were previously conceptual (coordinated case planning, for example) were translated into specific guidelines for practice.

Written protocols also helped make practice more consistent and provided documentation for training. Moreover, having written protocols helped county workers to recommend improvements to the process.

Some counties drafted written protocols before launching Linkages. Others created protocols as they implemented their pilot programs. With either method, the creation of written protocols helped counties avoid an informal, haphazard approach to service delivery and helped to ensure the *systematizing* and *institutionalization* of Linkages.

Counties need to develop the following written materials:

- Client Identification Protocols
- Confidentiality Policy and Information-Sharing Protocols
- Coordinated Case Planning Protocols

**“The way we implemented Linkages in our county was first to convey to CWS Workers and CalWORKs Employment Training Workers that we wanted them to start talking and working together on all joint cases. At the same time, we developed our vision, mission, guiding principles, and written protocols. We went from theory to practice and back to theory, tried things other counties were doing that proved successful for them, and over time developed a practice that worked for us. We started with two specialized case workers, one Employment and one Child Welfare, and then moved to other workers. Now it is the way we do business for all workers countywide.”**

**Randi Gottlieb  
Phase One Linkages Coordinator  
Tehama County**

## **Client Identification Protocols**

Once the county's target population is identified, it then becomes necessary to identify real families that fit that priority group. Most Linkages counties launched their programs serving cross-over families, those in Family Maintenance and CalWORKs.

In most counties, cross-over clients are identified in both programs. Emergency Response workers query about current involvement in CalWORKs and/or screen for CalWORKs eligibility. Clients applying for CalWORKs are asked about past and current involvement in child welfare and/or the client's child welfare status is checked by a clerk. Once a family has been identified as a cross-over family, they are referred to a Linkages case worker.

Linkages Planning Tools include client identification protocols, tracking logs, and a PowerPoint overview of the approach used in San Francisco County.

### **Linkages Planning Tools: *Client Identification***

**available on-line  
at [www.cfpic.org](http://www.cfpic.org)**

Client Identification Protocols  
Del Norte County

Mendocino County

Orange County

Merced County  
Client ID Protocol  
Client ID – Sanctioned Cases  
Screening and Weekly Reports

Stanislaus County  
Client ID Policy and Protocols  
Client ID Referral System  
Coordinated Case Screening Tool  
Tracking Log

PowerPoint Overview  
San Francisco

Partnership Project Recommendations  
from the Data Systems Work Group

## **Confidentiality/Information-Sharing**

In most Pioneer Counties, the welfare and child welfare programs are housed in the same agency, and confidentiality concerns were addressed by asking clients to sign one information release form that allowed information to be shared among caseworkers. To support this process, Linkages counties updated their confidentiality policies and developed protocols related to Linkages. They also required staff training on confidentiality, and in some cases, made available desk references with confidentiality forms and guidelines.

Linkages Planning Tools include confidentiality policies, release forms, and a desk guide.

**“Addressing confidentiality was particularly challenging for us because we have so many different agencies involved in our Linkages program, and each agency has different rules it must follow. On the other hand, having so many agencies involved has made our Linkages program that much stronger. Our confidentiality protocol works for us by giving us the flexibility to share information to best serve clients while, at the same time, protecting their privacy.”**

**Roy Redlich  
Phase One Linkages Coordinator  
Sonoma County**

### **Linkages Planning Tools: *Confidentiality* available on-line at [www.cfpic.org](http://www.cfpic.org)**

Mendocino County  
Confidentiality Policies and  
Procedures  
Confidentiality Q & A  
MDT Confidentiality Guidelines

San Luis Obispo County  
Desk Guide on Communication  
between Adult, Child Welfare  
and Participant Services Staff

Sonoma County  
Confidentiality MOU  
Client Release Form - MDT  
Sign-in Form

Stanislaus County  
Confidentiality MOU  
Multi-Agency Consent Form

Confidentiality Manual from the  
Cathy Wright Technical Assistance  
Center

See also the Partnership Project  
Recommendations from the  
Confidentiality Work Group

Appendix includes the  
Model Consent Form  
developed by the Youth  
Law Center

## Coordinated Case Planning Protocols

Once a model for the county's approach to coordinated case planning (CCP) has been selected, protocols need to be developed that provide direction for staff at every step of case planning, coordination and resolution.

Decisions need to be made regarding:

- Membership of the CCP team
- Methods of assessment
- Expectations for and methods of team communication
- Development of the coordinated service plan
- Level of family involvement
- Case management
- Case resolution

Of particular importance, counties need to determine which staff member is responsible (and accountable) for initiating dialogue with other staff about specific Linkages families, who the primary case manager will be, the method for ensuring that service plans and delivery are coordinated, and how cases are to be resolved.

Some counties (see the Orange County example in the Tool Box) have established policies that a family's CWS service plan automatically meets the CalWORKs plan requirements. In this way, the family is provided an opportunity to stay intact and focus on services to address child safety or neglect. After CWS issues are resolved, the family may continue in CalWORKs.

Stanislaus County's coordinated case planning process is diagrammed in Figure 6 on the next page. On the subsequent page, Figure 7 compares case descriptions of uncoordinated and coordinated plans for the same family.

**Linkages Planning  
Tools:  
*Coordinated Case  
Planning Protocols*  
available on-line at  
[www.cfpic.org](http://www.cfpic.org)**

CCP Protocols  
Mendocino County  
Stanislaus County  
Yolo County

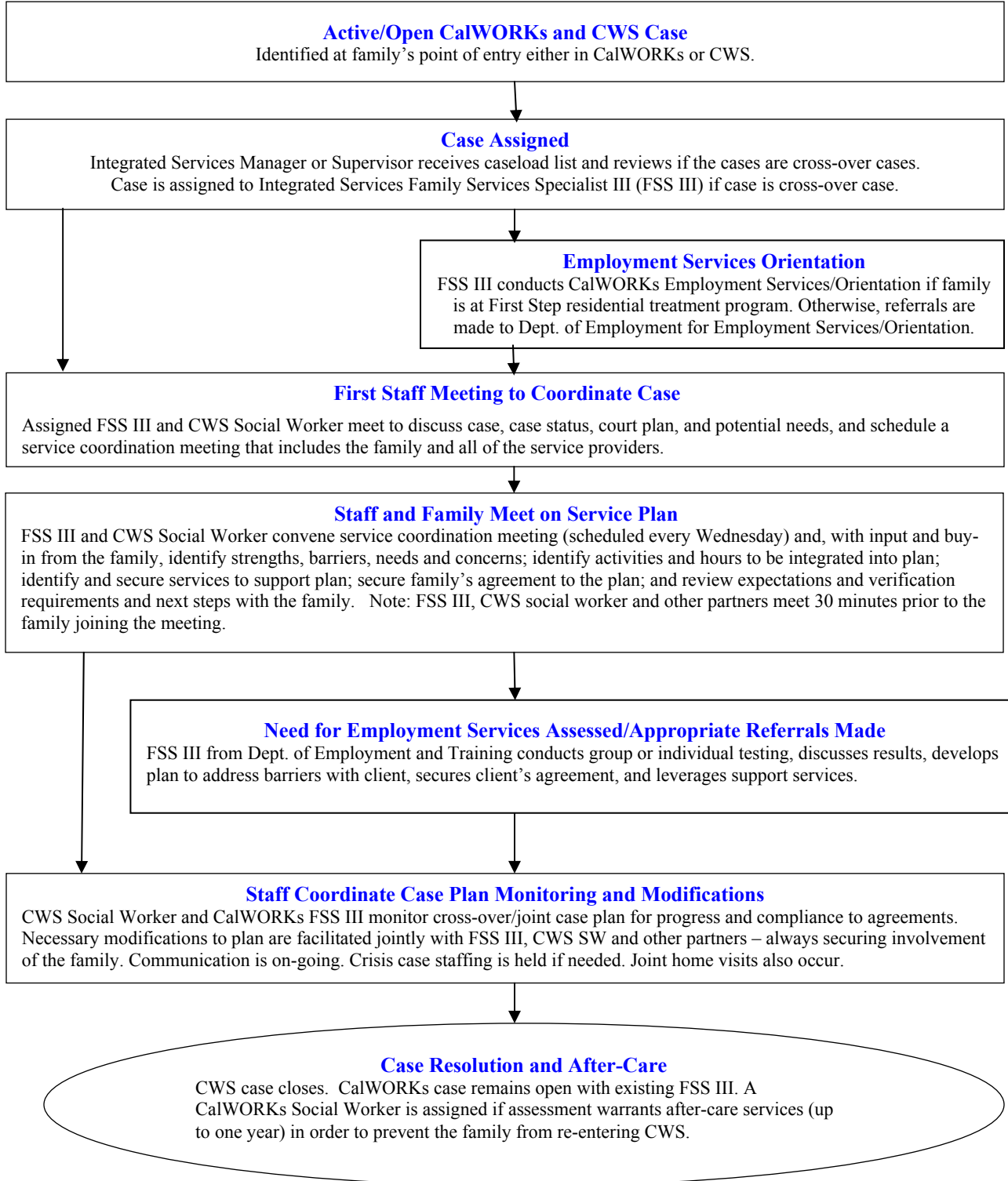
SLO County  
Protocols  
Screening Form  
Team Contact Form  
Case Plan Form

Orange County  
CWS Plan Meets  
Requirements for  
CalWORKs Plan

PowerPoint Presentations:  
Orange County  
Yolo County

Partnership Project  
Recommendations from  
the Coordinated Case  
Planning Work Group

**FIGURE 6**  
**STANISLAUS COUNTY: COORDINATED CASE PLANNING MODEL**  
**CalWORKs-Child Welfare Collaboration Effort**  
**on Cross-Over Active/Open Cases**



**FIGURE 7**  
**COMPARING UNCOORDINATED AND COORDINATED PLANS:**  
**IMPACTS ON FAMILY LIVES**

Below are two descriptions of case plans for the same family, a composite of actual circumstances for families in CalWORKs and CWS. These descriptions illustrate how uncoordinated and coordinated case plans can impact family life in dramatically different ways. The descriptions also showcase strategies to coordinate plans, approaches currently in use in Orange County.

**An Uncoordinated CalWORKs and CWS Plan**

*CalWORKs Plan*

Barbara and Ted\* are on CalWORKs. The CalWORKs worker did not inquire whether they are also receiving CWS services, and the clients did not mention it.

Ted is participating 35 hours per week in approved CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work activity. His CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work plan includes 32 hours of vocational training at the community college in a four-month intensive training program. Ted will have a refrigeration repair certification at the end of the class. Ted must also receive three hours a week of Behavioral Health Services. No child care is provided because Barbara is staying home with the children.

*CWS Plan*

The CWS worker did not inquire whether the family is on a CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work plan, and the clients did not mention it. Child Welfare Services activities require parenting education classes and counseling three times a week for three months for both parents. Barbara has mandated drug testing weekly and is required to participate in substance abuse treatment. In addition to a weekly therapist session, she has to attend a one-hour group session at least four times a week. Ted must attend Al-Anon once weekly.

**A Coordinated CalWORKs /CWS Plan**

Agency identifies clients who are in both programs and informs both the CalWORKs and CWS workers that Barbara and Ted are in CalWORKs and CWS. The CalWORKs worker calls the CWS worker to discuss the case and coordinate their case plans. The coordinated case plan includes the following elements:

For CalWORKs, Ted is participating 35 hours per week in an approved Welfare-to-Work activity. Ted's CalWORKs plan includes CWS activities: parenting classes and Al-Anon totaling ten hours per week and three hours coordinated with Behavioral Health Services.

The CWS worker uses participation in CalWORKs Behavioral Health Services to meet Barbara and Ted's counseling and parent education requirements. The CWS worker also uses the CalWORKs requirement of 20 hours of vocational training, which will be completed in six months, to demonstrate Ted's cooperation and efforts towards stability.

Child care for the children will be paid through CalWORKs while Barbara attends drug counseling and testing as required by the CWS case plan. The CWS and CalWORKs workers jointly address the appropriateness of the child care provider and Trustline requirements. Transportation is paid through CalWORKs for parents to get to various CWS and CalWORKs activities. Throughout, the CalWORKs and CWS workers maintain contact to monitor the family's progress and revise their case plan as needed.

\* Not their real names.

### **BUILDING BLOCK #3: ADMINISTRATION BUILDING BLOCK**

It is important to think through how to support Linkages and keep it on track, including the administrative supports of project management, staff training, funding, and evaluation.



#### **Project Management**

Linkages is managed or facilitated on a day-to-day basis by a Linkages Coordinator who has ongoing input from a Planning or Implementation Committee. The Linkages Work Plan is developed to articulate the county's vision of Linkages, and then to guide its implementation.

#### **Linkages Coordinator**

Appointing a Linkages Coordinator is an essential component of project management. Because the Linkages effort involves breaking down barriers between programs, cultures and social groups, it is important to give the Linkages Coordinator sufficient authority and time to accomplish their work. In Phase One, the most successful Coordinators were in management or line positions. Most Linkages Coordinators managed their responsibilities as one component of their overall responsibilities; in some counties, Linkages Coordinators were full-time.

**"The coordinator is like an air traffic controller. They facilitate the process, bring people to consensus, ask what if and why, ensure that the details are tended to, cut through red tape, play cheerleader, communicate – communicate – communicate, make refinements, and invent new ways of doing things."**

**Ana Pagan, Director  
Merced County Human Services Agency**

## **Planning and Implementation Committee**

As the work plan is developed and implemented, it is important to have the input and buy-in of a committed group of management and line staff. The group should be large enough to assure breadth of feedback, but not so large that meetings are not interactive or productive. The Social Services Director or a Deputy Director is the official chair of the committee, while the functional head of the group is the Linkages Coordinator. In addition to having representation from management and direct service staff from both child welfare and welfare, it is important to include knowledgeable and influential staff from human resources, staff training, finance/accounting, evaluation (including CWS/CMS), and, as needed, legal.

## **Work Plan**

As discussed in an earlier section, project management is guided through the Linkages Work Plan Process. It is important for leadership to participate in the development of the work plan and use the work plan to assess efforts underway and the products developed. It is also important that county leadership empower the Linkages Coordinator to use the work plan as a management tool with other staff and divisions. In essence, the work plan represents the direction set by leadership, and the Linkages Coordinator borrows this authority to work with staff to produce deliverables and meet timelines.

Work plans are developed using several tools:

**Sample Plan** – provides a model work plan that includes goals, products, objectives, and tasks for each Topic Area in the three Linkages Building Blocks. Counties modify the model to fit their specific goals for Linkages.

**Planning Worksheet** – offers an overview of the three Linkages Building Blocks and nested Topic Areas and provides instructions on how to develop a work plan that meets the county's goals.

### **Linkages Planning Tools: Project Management**

available on-line at  
[www.cfpic.org](http://www.cfpic.org)

Linkages Work Plan Process  
Sample Plan  
Planning Worksheet  
Work Plan Template  
Linkages Assessment Tool

Configuring the Work Plan as a  
Reporting Tool – the San  
Francisco Example

**“Every aspect of the  
Linkages Work Plan  
Process offered room to  
tailor it to meet our  
individual  
county needs.”**

**Mari Solis  
Linkages Coordinator  
San Luis Obispo County**

**Work Plan Template** – a blank template to help the Planning Committee set objectives, determine tasks, and identify products.

**Linkages Assessment Tool** – assesses the agency’s capacity and readiness to undertake Linkages. This is an informal tool to help identify where to invest planning resources.<sup>13</sup>

The process of developing the work plan involves selecting a Topic Area, identifying an implementation objective that can be accomplished within 12 months, and determining a product that will result from specific tasks within the established time frame. While the planning process can take time, Pioneer Counties learned that their collaborative discussions resulted in concrete, do-able action plans that greatly facilitated their implementation process.

### **Reports to Leadership and Partners**

Periodic reports to the Agency Director, Chief Administrative Office and Board of Supervisors are an important means to achieve buy-in for Linkages, keep up momentum, and build visibility. It is also important to check in and report progress to community groups and partners. For some internal reports, the work plan can be reconfigured to provide a progress report.

**“Yolo County utilized the work plan as an agreement between management and supervisors from both Child Welfare Services and Employment and Training Services. In times of dwindling resources, position vacancies and conflicting mandates, the work plan reminded the team of our commitment to the coordination of services.”**

**Debbie Powell  
Linkages Coordinator  
Yolo County**

## Staff Training

Planning and implementing Linkages creates a culture change in the county. Some staff thrive on goal-oriented changes and adapt easily; others are resistant. In either case, staff training is needed to educate both management and line staff about the new vision, as well as the specific protocols that will guide practice.

Pioneer Counties in Phase One conducted training in a number of fundamental areas for which there are tools and materials.

### Basic Orientation

It is valuable to provide staff with basic information about the “other” system that they will be working with. Welfare workers are not always familiar with the basic responsibilities and activities of child welfare, nor are child welfare workers typically aware of the responsibilities and resources available under CalWORKs. In Phase One, each Pioneer County conducted a “Basic Orientation” for workers in both programs. Two educational primers are available that outline each program. Also, a Basic Orientation curriculum is available through the Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice (RCFFP) at University of California, Davis. Many counties included social time during their orientations, recognizing that personal relationships are one motivation for collaboration.

### Linkages Planning Tools: *Training*

available on-line  
at [www.cfpic.org](http://www.cfpic.org)

#### CCRWF Primers:

Understanding the Child Welfare System in California: A Primer for Service Providers and Policymakers

Understanding CalWORKs: A Primer for Service Providers and Policymakers

#### Curricula from RCFFP

Basic Orientation

Coordinated Case Planning

Supervising in a Coordinated Services Environment

#### Training Plans

Del Norte: Work Plan as Training Tool

SLO County – Integrating Linkages into Training

Mendocino County

Basic Orientation Overview

Linkages Training Outline

Basic Orientation Evaluation Form

#### Partnership Project Recommendations from the Organizational Change and Training Work Group

Linkages: A Staff Training Video on the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project

## **Other Training Tools and Approaches**

In addition to offering a Basic Orientation, a number of other training tools and approaches are available.

- CCRWF worked in partnership with WalSmith Productions to produce a staff training video on Linkages.
- Del Norte County has developed an innovative approach that uses their Linkages Work Plan as a training tool to educate staff about Linkages. For background, see their PowerPoint presentation.
- In California, county child welfare programs are required by the state to develop an annual training program. Pioneer Counties used this planning process to integrate Linkages into their overall training plan.
- In order to sustain Linkages, many counties now include Linkages training as part of their new hire orientation.
- RCFFP offers curricula and training on coordinated case planning and supervising in a coordinated services environment. They also offer facilitated training to develop vision and mission statements.
- Some Linkages teams receive training on team work and team decision-making.
- Related to outcomes evaluation, some counties are adding a Linkages component to their CWS/CMS training.

As counties move from pilot program to county-wide service systems, building in a feedback loop between Linkages staff and the planning committee is a valuable way to identify needed training or to gather ideas to modify existing training. The Child and Family Policy Institute of California, in partnership with the state's Child Welfare Training Academies and the Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice, can help counties develop or modify training to meet their needs.

**“It was important to provide staff and partners the training and tools they needed to implement our new approach – Linkages. The Basic Orientation helped everyone get on the same page, but continual training and reinforcement were important.”**

**Nenita Dean  
Linkages Coordinator  
Stanislaus County**

## Financing

Providing coordinated services allows counties to blend funding for client families with the possibility of expanding or extending services.

Pioneer Counties found it a worthwhile investment to:

- Establish an accounting structure that is invisible to the client, understood by caseworkers, and managed by accounting staff.
- Understand sources of funding for families involved in more than one system.

### Accounting Structure

Stanislaus County has designed a model accounting structure that is modifiable to the needs of different counties. Developing and using the accounting structure involves five steps:

1. Define the service need or program design.
2. Review the funding sources available to the county.
3. Select all potential/most likely funding sources.
4. Choose the specific funding streams/braids to fit the program.
5. Document the financial requirements.

A PowerPoint tutorial for this accounting structure is available on-line. The tutorial also includes a spreadsheet that demonstrates an actual Linkages case.

### Linkages Planning Tools: *Flexible Financing*

available on-line  
at [www.cfpic.org](http://www.cfpic.org)

Stanislaus County Accounting Structure  
PowerPoint Tutorial

AB 2496 – Authorizing Legislation for the  
Child Welfare Services Program  
Improvement Fund

CDSS Informational Power Point on  
Flexible Financing (10-28-04)

CDSS Letters and Notices  
County Fiscal Letters (CFL)  
03/04-22  
03/04-34  
94/95-38  
02/03-33

All County Letter 04-32

Check for updates at "CDSS Letters and  
Notices" on the CDSS website at  
[http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/  
default.htm](http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/default.htm)

CDSS Fiscal Unit  
(916) 657-1668  
or e-mail [fiscal.systems@dss.ca.gov](mailto:fiscal.systems@dss.ca.gov)

CDSS Fiscal Academy  
UCD Extension/Center for Human Services  
[www.humanservices.edu/fiscalacademy](http://www.humanservices.edu/fiscalacademy)  
(530) 757-8643

## **Funding Sources**

While changes in federal law and regulation can result in changes in the funding available for coordinated services and Linkages, at this point in time there are four approaches available to fund Linkages services: AB 2496, Matching Funds, Braided Funding, and Title IV-E Training Funds.

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) offers free consultations to counties, through their Fiscal Unit (see tool box on preceding page). CDSS is also sponsoring a Fiscal Academy, operated through the Center for Human Services at the University of California, Davis, Extension. The Fiscal Academy makes available periodic statewide and regional trainings on fiscal issues. For more information, contact [www.humanservices.edu/fiscalacademy](http://www.humanservices.edu/fiscalacademy) or (530) 757-8643.

### ***AB 2496: The CWS Program Improvement Fund***

Assembly Bill 2496 created a Child Welfare Services Program Improvement Fund in the State Treasury, consisting of private grants, gifts, and bequests made to the State. Upon appropriation by the Legislature, monies from this fund can be expended for the purpose of enhancing the state's ability to provide supports that promote positive outcomes for children and families. Counties do not have access to the funds in AB 2496. To the extent possible, AB 2496 requires the State to use the monies in the fund as a match to obtain federal participation in the cost of eligible activities, and to augment federal, state, and county funds made available for child welfare services programs.

Counties that wish to use private donated funds as a match for Title IV-E training must have a procedure which appropriates the donated funds through the county budget, similar to procedures for the State as set forth in AB 2496. In AB 2496, the State Legislature appropriates the donations based on the submission of eligible activity requests such as support for social worker training. These funds are considered the State match to draw down the Title IV-E funds.

### ***Matching Funds***

Counties can use third party contributions (that are not in-kind) to match their Title IV-B and IV-E funding. These funds must be used to expand a program and not supplant current matching funds, and they must be used for allowable Title IV-E Administrative Costs. For more information, see the CDSS PowerPoint on Flexible Financing (10-28-04) and the CDSS informational letters listed in the tool box on the preceding page.

### ***Braided Funding***

Depending on the target population and the eligibility requirements for various funding sources, some funding can be used as a match for other funding sources.

### ***IV-E Training Funds***

Training costs associated with child welfare programs can be supported through federal Title IV-E training funds which provide up to 75% of financing (depending on a county's discount rate).

45 Code of Federal Regulations 1356.60(b)(1) finds that 75 percent Federal Financial Participation is available only for the costs of training personnel employed by the County Welfare Department (CWD) or preparing for employment with the CWS, and for providing short-term training (including travel and per diem) to current or prospective foster or adoptive parents and the members of state-licensed or approved child care institutions providing care to foster or adopted children receiving Title IV-E assistance.

For more information, see CFL No. 03/04-34. It is also important to regularly check the CDSS website (link available in tool box on page 31) for updates to "Letters and Notices."

**"Once our Linkages program was up and running, including the active participation of our fiscal section, we found we could be a lot more creative about identifying support for our families. Resources expanded – and so did services."**

**Nenita Dean  
Linkages Coordinator  
Stanislaus County**

## Evaluation

Once the county's Planning Committee has determined which client outcomes and indicators are to be used, the county needs to set up an apparatus for collecting and analyzing the outcomes of Linkages services.

To reduce workload and increase the likelihood of an ongoing evaluation, Phase One Linkages counties are coordinating their Linkages evaluation efforts with their CWS outcomes assessments (AB 636), thus not

doubling work efforts by creating simultaneous evaluation efforts. While outcomes evaluation is being conducted in some Linkages counties, it is not yet established in all counties, though work is underway to create a consistent statewide approach to Linkages evaluation.

Key steps include data collection, analysis, and reporting, which are outlined in the Linkages Evaluation Guide (see Figure 8 on the next page for a synopsis). As the Planning Committee makes decisions about data collection and analysis, it is essential to have a data/evaluation expert as part of the team.

Finally, in order to support state leadership having the capacity to evaluate outcomes across counties – and thus determine statewide results, it is also critical that counties use a common method for labeling and tracking data (see the Linkages Protocol for use in the Business Objects in the CWS/CMS data base).

**Linkages Planning Tools:  
*Outcomes Evaluation***

**available on-line at  
[www.cfpic.org](http://www.cfpic.org)**

Linkages Evaluation Guide

See section on Data  
Collection, Analysis, and  
Reporting.

**FIGURE 8**  
**EVALUATION STEPS**  
**FROM THE LINKAGES EVALUATION GUIDE**

**DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND REPORTING**

There are several ways to approach the county's evaluation. The evaluation team needs to work with the research and data experts to select a methodology that is do-able and will yield the desired results.

*Consider:*

**A comparison of clients receiving and clients not receiving Linkages services**

If there is a pilot city or location for Linkages services, consider tracking and comparing the outcomes for this Linkages population to a similar population county-wide or in another similar city or location that is *not* receiving Linkages services.

***A comparison of before and after Linkages***

If Linkages services have been implemented county-wide, you may want to track changes in the outcomes for that population over time, beginning with baseline data from before Linkages was implemented.

**Collect and analyze outcomes data**

This means that your data systems must have some mechanism for indicating that a client/family is receiving coordinated services and be able to extract that data from the overall data set for your selected target population.

There is a protocol for tracking Linkages clients in the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS). This protocol is outlined in a memo in Appendix G. There is not yet developed an equivalent protocol for the TANF data systems.

**Develop a reporting timeframe**

With your evaluation team, select a data reporting timeframe (e.g., quarterly, mid-year, and annual reports).

**Meet with your evaluation team to review the data**

Assess any changes and develop theories about the meaning of the changes in the outcomes. Be open to finding unintended positive or negative impacts of coordinated services that may not be in the county's "theory of change." Consider any implications of shortcomings of the data quality.

**Confirm your theories through research with clients and/or staff.** This could include conducting interviews, focus groups or surveys.

**Make policy or practice changes according to your findings.**

**Keep collecting data, analyzing it, and revising your practices to make your services even better.**

## CONCLUSION

Linkages targets high-risk families, coordinates their services, and helps staff make the best use of limited resources. Through the Linkages Planning Guide, counties have the opportunity, using the Work Plan Process, to jumpstart their planning and implementation of Linkages, utilizing tools and materials developed in Phase One of the Partnership Project.

Before undertaking Linkages, it is critical that the county's leadership determine they are committed – not to a pilot project – but to a coordinated services approach that helps families. Fundamental to this is an understanding that the county's Child Welfare Services can work as an anti-poverty program, and the county's welfare program can help prevent child abuse and neglect.

As counties have implemented Linkages, they have also created new approaches and identified connections to existing programs. Some counties are using Linkages as a prevention strategy to implement Differential Response in the redesign of the child welfare system. Working with The Children's Research Center, Orange County has reconfigured the Structured Decision-Making (SDM) Risk Assessment Tool which now can be used to assess CalWORKs clients at-risk of entrance into CWS. Other counties are partnering with Family to Family to ensure that a CalWORKs representative participates in Team Decision Making meetings, while yet others are exploring how Linkages participation can help achieve more timely permanency for children.

In an era when government resources are limited and bureaucracies complex, Linkages offers counties a new way of doing business to better serve families. By breaking down barriers between systems, encouraging communication among staff dedicated to serving the public, establishing agreed-upon methods to guarantee that services are consistent and sustained, and by offering families caring, coordinated services – counties can move forward to “fight poverty and abuse.”

**Linkages Planning Tools:  
*New Directions*  
available on-line at  
[www.cfpic.org](http://www.cfpic.org)**

Structured Decision-Making  
(SDM) Risk Assessment Tool

The Children's Research Center  
<http://www.nccd-crc.org/>

Partnership Project Analysis:  
Connecting Linkages with  
Differential Response

# APPENDIX

**APPENDIX:  
HISTORY OF THE  
CALWORKS/CHILD WELFARE PARTNERSHIP PROJECT**

Inspired by the nationally recognized program in El Paso County, Colorado, the first phase of the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project was launched in November 2000. The effort was funded by the Stuart Foundation, directed through the California Center for Research on Women and Families, a program of the Public Health Institute, and launched in partnership with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).

In the first phase, a statewide county survey was conducted to increase knowledge of county coordination practices already underway, something that was not previously known. The first phase also developed recommendations on how counties could improve coordination of child welfare and welfare programs.

Recommendations were developed by work groups in six programmatic areas identified as priorities: Organizational Structures, Flexible Financing, Organizational Change and Training, Data Systems, Confidentiality, and Coordinated Case Planning. Recommended changes in state law and practice were also developed. Over fifty county and state leaders worked for six months in a facilitated process to develop the recommendations, which were summarized in a series of publications, distributed to all 58 counties, and presented at a statewide conference for county and state leaders in May 2002.

The final two years of Phase One focused on implementation. Modest, two-year grants were given to support 13 counties to implement coordinated welfare/child welfare services. Counties were also supported with informational convenings and technical assistance. Each county designated a Linkages Coordinator, organized a Planning and Implementation Committee, developed an annual Work Plan, and strategically went about planning and implementing their Linkages services.

Due to the success of Phase One, the Stuart Foundation committed to funding for another Phase of Linkages, which began in April 2005. In Phase Two, 17 additional California counties are receiving technical assistance to plan and implement Linkages. Phase Two is directed through the **Child and Family Policy Institute of California**, affiliated with the County Welfare Directors Association. The effort to develop an evaluation methodology, funded by the Zellerbach Family Foundation, also continues in Phase Two.

**Pioneer Linkages Counties  
(Phase One)**

**Alameda \* Del Norte \* Mendocino \*  
Merced \* Orange \* San Francisco \* San Luis Obispo \*  
Santa Barbara \* Solano \* Sonoma \* Stanislaus \* Tehama \* Yolo**

**Phase Two Counties**

**Calaveras \* Contra Costa \* Fresno \*  
Humboldt \* Kern \* Lassen \* Los Angeles \*  
Madera \* Marin \* Napa \* Sacramento \*  
Santa Cruz \* Siskiyou \* Sutter \* Trinity \* Ventura \* Yuba**

## **APPENDIX: LINKAGES TOOL BOX**

### **Linkages Planning Tools: *Strategic Direction***

Examples of Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles (VMGP)

- Mendocino County, CA
- San Luis Obispo County, CA
- Tehama County, CA
- Yolo County, CA
  
- El Paso County, Colorado

Questions to Guide Planning Committee Discussion of VMGP

The Four Linkages Values

PowerPoint Presentations on Strategic Direction

- Merced County
- San Luis Obispo County

### **Linkages Planning Tools: *Coordinated Case Planning Model***

Historical Note on Organizational Structures

Partnership Project Recommendations from the CCP Work Group

### **Linkages Planning Tools: *Outcomes Evaluation – Planning***

Linkages Evaluation Guide

- See section on Planning

### **Linkages Planning Tools: *Client Identification***

Client Identification Protocols

- Del Norte County
- Mendocino County
- Orange County
  
- Merced County
  - Client ID Protocol
  - Client ID – Sanctioned Cases
  - Screening and Weekly Reports
  
- Stanislaus County
  - Client ID Policy and Protocols
  - Client ID Referral System
  - Coordinated Case Screening Tool
  - Tracking Log

PowerPoint Overview

- San Francisco

Partnership Project Recommendations from the Data Systems Work Group

### **Linkages Planning Tools: *Confidentiality***

Mendocino County

Confidentiality Policies and Procedures

Confidentiality Q & A

MDT Confidentiality Guidelines

San Luis Obispo County

Desk Guide on Communication between Adult, Child Welfare and Participant Services Staff

Sonoma County

Confidentiality MOU

Client Release Form - MDT

Sign-in Form

Stanislaus County

Confidentiality MOU

Multi-Agency Consent Form

Confidentiality Manual from the Cathy Wright Technical Assistance Center

See also the Partnership Project Recommendations from the Confidentiality Work Group

Appendix includes the Model Consent Form developed by the Youth Law Center

### **Linkages Planning Tools: *Coordinated Case Planning Protocols***

CCP Protocols

Mendocino County

Stanislaus County

Yolo County

SLO County

Protocols

Screening Form

Team Contact Form

Case Plan Form

Orange County

CWS Plan Meets Requirements for CalWORKs Plan

PowerPoint Presentations:

Orange County

Yolo County

Partnership Project Recommendations from the Coordinated Case Planning Work Group

### **Linkages Planning Tools: *Project Management***

Linkages Work Plan Process

Sample Plan

Planning Worksheet

Work Plan Template

Linkages Assessment Tool

Configuring the Work Plan as a Reporting Tool – the San Francisco Example

## **Linkages Planning Tools: *Training***

### CCRWF Primers:

- Understanding the Child Welfare System in California: A Primer for Service Providers and Policymakers
- Understanding CalWORKs: A Primer for Service Providers and Policymakers

### Curricula from RCFFP

- Basic Orientation
- Coordinated Case Planning
- Supervising in a Coordinated Services Environment

### Training Plans

- Del Norte: Work Plan as Training Tool
- SLO County – Integrating Linkages into Training
- Mendocino County
  - Basic Orientation Overview
  - Linkages Training Outline
  - Basic Orientation Evaluation Form

### Partnership Project Recommendations

- from the Organizational Change and Training Work Group

Linkages: A Staff Training Video on the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project

## **Linkages Planning Tools: *Flexible Financing***

Stanislaus County Accounting Structure PowerPoint Tutorial

AB 2496 – Authorizing Legislation for the Child Welfare Services Program Improvement Fund

CDSS Informational Power Point on Flexible Financing (10-28-04)

### CDSS Letters and Notices

- County Fiscal Letters (CFL)
  - 03/04-22
  - 03/04-34
  - 94/95-38
  - 02/03-33

All County Letter 04-32

Check for updates at “CDSS Letters and Notices” on the CDSS website at <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/default.htm>

### CDSS Fiscal Unit

- (916) 657-1668
- or e-mail [fiscal.systems@dss.ca.gov](mailto:fiscal.systems@dss.ca.gov)

### CDSS Fiscal Academy

- UCD Extension/Center for Human Services
- [www.humanservices.edu/fiscalacademy](http://www.humanservices.edu/fiscalacademy)
- (530) 757-8643

**Linkages Planning Tools: *Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting***

Linkages Evaluation Guide

See section on Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting

**Linkages Planning Tools: *New Directions***

Structured Decision-Making (SDM) Risk Assessment Tool

The Children's Research Center

<http://www.nccd-crc.org/>

Partnership Project Analysis: Connecting Linkages with Differential Response

**APPENDIX:  
FOR MORE INFORMATION  
ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP PROJECT**

**For more information about the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project, contact the Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC) at (916) 551-1431, or go to [www.cfpic.org](http://www.cfpic.org)**

**The Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC) is a private non-profit organization formed to advance the development of sound public policy and promote program excellence in county Human Services Agencies through research, education, training and technical assistance. CFPIC was founded by and operates under the auspices of California's 58 County Welfare Directors.**

**Development of the Linkages Planning Guide**

**The *Linkages Planning Guide* was developed by Kate Karpilow, Ph.D., Executive Director of the California Center for Research on Women and Families (CCRWF), a program of the Public Health Institute. For more information on CCRWF, go to [www.ccrwf.org](http://www.ccrwf.org). Ms. Karpilow directed the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project at CCRWF from November 2000 through March 2005.**

***Recommended Citation:***

**Karpilow, K.A. (2005, October). *Linkages Planning Guide*. Berkeley, CA: California Center for Research on Women and Families, Public Health Institute.**

## END NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> CalWORKs is California's welfare (TANF) program and is more formally known as California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids, or CalWORKs.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1997). *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-being*. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

<sup>3</sup> Ehrle, J., Andrews Scarcella, A., & Geen, R. (2004). Teaming up: Collaboration between welfare and child welfare agencies since welfare reform. *Children and Family Services Review*, 26, 265-285.

<sup>4</sup> California Department of Social Services, Research and Development Division, Data Analysis and Publications Branch, Children's Program Team. (August 2002). *The Child Welfare System and CalWORKs: Overlap in California Child Populations*. Available on the CDSS website at: [http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/research/res/pdf/CWS\\_CalWORKs.pdf](http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/research/res/pdf/CWS_CalWORKs.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Experiences of dual-system families are further documented in Geen, R., Fender, L., Leos-Urbel, J., & Markowitz, T. (2001, February). *Welfare reforms effect on child welfare caseloads*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute (Assessing the New Federalism Discussion paper 01-04).

<sup>6</sup> These building blocks were developed through the recommendations of Partnership Project work groups and the implementation efforts of Pioneer Counties. The Linkages Training Video highlights leadership as an additional building block.

<sup>7</sup> When adapting tools from other jurisdictions, county leaders need to evaluate the requirements of their own social service systems. This process involves an assessment of organizational structure, staffing resources and culture, service population, and resources, among many considerations.

<sup>8</sup> After the Partnership Project began its work in 2000, we learned that coordinated case planning was a concept that was widely known and almost universally supported, but the phrase had different meanings in different counties. Through our work group discussions, we identified common features of coordinated case planning (CCP) and different CCP models.

<sup>9</sup> Congress passed the Adoption and Safe Families Act, or ASFA, which required the reporting and evaluation of outcomes measures to the federal government.

<sup>10</sup> Assembly Bill 636 authorized the California Child and Family Services Review, which established requirements that outcome measures be evaluated in child welfare. Data is stored and analyzed using a system known as CWS/CMS, or Child Welfare Services Case Management System.

<sup>11</sup> The value of this approach is that no additional data collection (or the expense for this effort) needs to be undertaken to evaluate Linkages.

<sup>12</sup> McCulley, S.A. (2003, Spring). *Advanced Policy Analysis: Linkages Program Evaluation Plan*. Prepared for the Alameda County Social Services Agency, Alameda, California.

<sup>13</sup> It is most productive to complete the Linkages Assessment Tool after the Planning Guide and Sample Plan have been thoroughly reviewed and discussed.