



# Linkages: CalWORKs and Child Welfare Collaboration to Improve Outcomes

Presentation to the Children's Bureau  
March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Laura Martinez, CDSS, OCAP

Stuart Oppenheim, CFPIC, Executive Director

Danna Fabella, CFPIC, Linkages Project Director

# Overview

- Vision Created in 1998, 1999
- Work began in 2000
- Planning Phase 2000-2002
- Three Stages of Implementation
  - Pilot Phase 2003
  - Second Implementation Phase 2005
  - Current Implementation Phase 2006-2011
- Steady Expansion to Include 28 of California's 58 Counties actively participating in the initiative, with several others continuing to implement though not part of the project

# Shared Vision

- CalWORKs can serve as a child abuse prevention program by providing families the resources they need to promote self-sufficiency and well-being for their children
- Child Welfare Services can serve as an anti-poverty program in helping families achieve self-sufficiency

# Foundation of the Vision

- Poverty is a risk factor for child abuse and neglect:
  - Families with annual incomes below \$15,000, compared to families with annual incomes above \$20,000 are over 22 times more likely to experience some form of maltreatment.
  - (US Dept HHS)

# California

## Overlap of clients in Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF and Child Welfare Services (CWS):

- ❖ Statewide, 60% children in CWS have a history of AFDC or TANF aid
- ❖ Varies by county: from 44% - 87%
- ❖ CWS use predicted by: AFDC/TANF use, unemployment, and family poverty rates

(CDSS RAD, August 2002)

# Implementation 1999 - 2007

- Solicited County Participation
  - First Phase Pioneer counties
- Provided Structured Planning Process
- Worked with Counties to Develop Implementation Tools
- Used Protocols, Policies, Tools Created by Workgroup Process and by Individual Counties to Create Cross-Systems Partnerships in Each Jurisdiction
- Used Project to Create Cross-County Learning Environment
- Expanded to new counties
  - Second Phase counties

# Federal Grant Activities: For continued Expansion 2007 -2011

- Selected eight new counties and continued to support Phase I and II counties
- Convenings (Semi-annual)
  - Self-Assessment
  - Work Plan Development
  - Peer Sharing
  - Skill building
- Technical Assistance Site Visits/calls
- Monthly Newsletters
- Dedicated Intranet for information sharing
- Evaluation

# County Workplan Development

- Strategic Direction
  - Vision, Mission
  - Guiding Principles
  - Leadership
- Target Population
  - Who will be served?
- Outcomes
  - What is success?
- Case Planning Model
  - What structures will link the 2 programs?
- Confidentiality Policy
  - What privacy protections are in place?
  - What information is shared?



# Project goals

- Support mutual program goals and outcomes between CWS and CalWORKs to improve the lives of vulnerable families and children
- Create agency environments that share resources to better serve vulnerable families
- Coordinate Case Planning on mutual families being served by child welfare and CalWORKs

# What does Linkages look like?

- Units consisting of staff from both programs.
- Co-location of TANF/W2W staff in the Child Welfare Offices
- Co-location of Child Welfare staff in TANF/W2W offices
- Coordinated Case Planning staff meetings
- Fiscal Case Plans and Meetings
- Joint meeting with mutual Parents to create coordinated case plans

# What does Linkages look like (cont.)

- Formal cross training opportunities
  - Regional Training Academy
  - County developed Linkages training
- Sharing Resources
  - CWS Team Decision Making
  - CalWORKs Single Allocation
    - Mental Health
    - Substance Abuse
    - Domestic Violence
    - Other

# Who is being served?

- Voluntary and Court ordered Family Maintenance
- Family Reunification
- Emergency Response Referrals
- After-care

# Evaluation

- Case Study Counties: Stanislaus, Los Angeles, San Bernardino
- Surveys:
  - Organizational Change
  - Implementation
  - Staff

Outcomes

# Evaluation (cont.)

- Survey Results:
  - Factors important to Success
    - Strong leadership
    - Likelihood that families will be better off
    - Clear communication between CWS and CalWORKs
    - Compatible procedures

# Evaluation (cont.)

- Staff
  - Requires continuing support and training
  - Requires special level of personal commitment
  - Increases job satisfaction
  - Perceives it as improving outcomes for families

# Evaluation (cont.)

- Case Study counties: (3)
  - Two out of the three continue to have strong commitment from leadership to implement Linkages
  - Staff are seeing a rise in their Linkages cases as the need in the general population increases
  - The counties are finding it challenging to find the resources to serve mutual families
  - One case study county dropped from the project
    - Recent exemptions to CalWORKs decreased the mutual client population
    - Reduction/changes in staffing



# Evaluation (cont.)

- Client Outcomes:
  - Data challenges due to different system that do not “talk” to one another
    - Creates a challenge for mutual client identification and tracking
    - Manual reports are time consuming

## Evaluation (cont.)

- However, although small data sample there were some positive trends:
  - Substantiated recurrence at 3 month was higher than the comparison group, the percentage of children needing to be removed was lower for the Linkages families
  - Higher percentage of children reunified for the Linkages families than the comparison
  - Fewer CalWORKs (TANF) sanctions for the Linkages families



# MEETING THE LINKAGE CHALLENGE VIDEO

