

Workforce Development Division	Welfare-to-Work Handbook
75-8: CalWORKs Family Reunification (AB429 - Linkages)	Effective: 10/21/09

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I. Introduction

A. Overview

Assembly Bill 429 allows continuation of CalWORKs services for the parent or parents of children who have been removed from the home. If the county determines that services are necessary for Family Reunification (FR), AB 429 provisions allow the parent(s) to receive CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work (WTW) Supportive Services (i.e., WTW plan), substance abuse, and mental health services, if it is determined that such services are necessary for family reunification.

The bill also provides continuation of CalWORKs benefits after reunification.

AB 429 (aka "Linkages") services promote safety and permanency for children and the well-being of the family by reducing the number of children re-entering Foster Care. Linkages services are an interdepartmental collaboration between Family and Children's Services and CalWORKs to address the common barriers that limit parents' ability to work and keep their children safely at home.

[CDSS All County Letter \(ACL\) 02-36](#) informs counties of the changes required by passage of AB 429 and summarizes eligibility, case management and reporting requirements.

B. Purpose

Linkages Family Reunification services allows the CalWORKs case to remain open while the client is receiving reunification services. The Protective Services Worker initiates Linkages services between FCS and CalWORKs when children are removed from their home.

Advantages

1. Allows CalWORKs case to remain active without children in the home.
2. CalWORKs can provide services needed for reunification such as substance abuse, mental health, and DV counseling, transportation.
3. CW Social Work Unit intervention as well as work and training related services.
4. CalWORKs services can be incorporated into the FCS Family Reunification Case Plan.

5. CalWORKs services use of federal and state funds instead of county funds.

6. CalWORKs services promotes positive outcomes

C. Acronyms

AB429 - California State Assembly Bill 429

AU - Assistance Unit is the group of persons in the household receiving aid

CAAP - County Adult Assistance Program

CalWORKs WTW-ES - CalWORKs Welfare to Work Employment Specialist

CalWORKs - California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids

E&E - Eligibility and Engagement

ES - Employment Specialist

EW - Eligibility Worker

FCS - Family Children Services

FCC - Foster Care Coordinator

FR - Family Reunification

LC - Linkages Coordinator

LCCM - Linkages Case Coordination Meetings

MAP - Maximum Aid Payment

NNI - Net Nonexempt Income

PAFS - Public Assistance Food Stamps

PSW - Protective Services Worker

TANF - Temporary AID to Needy Families formerly known as AFDC

TFS - Transitional Food Stamps

WtW - Welfare to Work

II. References

A. References from the Law and Regulations

Welfare and Institution Code (WIC) §11203

California State Assembly Bill (AB) 429

CDSS All County Letters (ACL): 02-15, 02-36, and 03-52

Manual Policies and Procedures (MPP): 22-071.1, 40-181.2., 82- 812.5.

III. Policy

A. Definitions

1. Linkages Case Coordination Meeting (LCCM)

Workers in FCS and CalWORKs are required to establish a collaborative case management process that includes 1) determination of the family's need for CalWORKs services to support Family Reunification (FR) plans, and 2) the coordination of CalWORKs services with other child welfare services needed for FR.

The FCS-PSW and CalWORKs staff must work together for the best interest of the family and program, and within a framework of team building and communication. Team building and communication are realized through the Linkages Case Coordination Meeting (LCCM). The LCCM brings the family, FCS-PSW, CalWORKs staff, other community providers and family members together for case planning and coordination.

LCCMs are scheduled by the designated Linkages staff person who sets the date and time, and disseminates all relevant information for the LCCM.

Every LCCM is preceded by a pre-staffing meeting which is organized by the Linkages Coordinator. This pre-staffing meeting is held to clarify logistics, participants, and roles and responsibilities of PSWs and CalWORKs staff at the meeting.

2. CalWORKs Eligibility

a) Definition of a CalWORKs Reunification Case

1. The child(ren) has/have been removed from the parent(s) and is placed in out-of-home care.
2. The parent(s) and child(ren) remaining in the home are ineligible for cash aid.
3. The Protective Service Worker (FCS-PSW) has determined that the provisions of CalWORKs services are necessary for Family Reunification.
4. FCS-PSW has initiated a request for continuation of FR services.

b) CalWORKs Eligibility for Reunification Services

Eligibility for CalWORKs reunification services exists when:

1. All children are removed from the home and placed in out-of-home care or,

2. Some children are removed from the home but the case becomes ineligible for cash grant due to excess income that resulted from the CalWORKs Assistance Unit (AU) reduction.

Examples of support services include:

- Transportation
- Work/Training related costs
- Mental Health and Substance Abuse services
- Domestic Violence Services
- Goodwill vouchers for work clothes
- Transitional Food Stamps (TFS)
- CalWORKs Social Work services
- Childcare for children remaining in the home

Clients who had their aid suspended due to sanctions or who have been exempt from Welfare-to-Work activities and services are also eligible to receive CalWORKs services as defined in FR cases. Clients under sanction may be reinstated to CalWORKs services immediately.

Children need to be discontinued the day before Foster Care payments begin.

3. Food Stamp Eligibility

CalWORKs Family Reunification cases are eligible for five months of TFS after the case has been discontinued. In the fifth month parents/caretakers need to apply for NAFS.

The Employment Specialist assigned to CalWORKs Family Reunification case should remind client to apply for NAFS before the end of the five months period.

4. Medi-Cal Eligibility

After the CalWORKs case has been discontinued, cash linked Medi-Cal eligibility ends. Medi-Cal eligibility will have to be re-determined.

5. CalWORKs AB 429 Family Reunification Cases and Other Linkages Cases

Linkages cases are opened in both programs and AB 429 cases are a subset of Linkages cases.

If after separation one or more children remain in the home and cash eligibility continues for the remaining family members, the case is considered a Linkages case not a CalWORKs Family Reunification Case.

Family Reunification AB 429 Case	Linkages Case
All children are separated from the home and placed in out-of-home care and CalWORKs case becomes ineligible for a cash grant.	Regular Linkages case when the case is open in both CalWORKs and Family Children's Services. See Linkages Policies and Procedures Handbook
Some children are separated from the home, but CalWORKs case become ineligible due to excess income that resulted from the AU reduction.	Some Children separated from the home, but eligibility for CalWORKs cash grant continues

During the Family Reunification period, the parent(s) in the case may be issued cash aid through the CAAP Program. The CalWORKs WTW Employment Specialist will issue the necessary supportive services to the parent(s). Parents are eligible for Transitional Food Stamps, as the family is receiving CalWORKs services. Cash-linked eligibility to Medi-Cal during the FR period stops and medical eligibility will have to be re-determined.

IV. Process

A. Identification of Linkages Cases

1. Identification of CalWORKs Reunification Families by Foster Care Unit

Whenever the FCS-PSW in the Emergency Response Unit (ERU), Court Dependency Unit (CDU), or Family Service Unit (FSU) removes a child or children from the home of any biological or adoptive parent for placement out of the home, the PSW completes Form 1501 and forwards it to the Foster Care Eligibility Unit for determination of Foster Care eligibility.

The Linkages Coordinator (LC) also identifies AB 429 cases and sends e-mail alerts to all staff involved.

2. Identification of CalWORKs Reunification Families by designated Linkages Staff

The Linkages Coordinator or designated staff identifies CalWORKs Family Reunification cases from the monthly report and e-mail alerts are sent by the CalWORKs Social Work Unit clerk to FCS-PSWs and Supervisors alerting them on potential cases identified.

B. Roles and Responsibilities

1. Responsibilities of the Foster Care Application Coordinator - Supervisor

1. Forward one copy of Form 1501 with the Form 8102 (PSW Requesting CW Services) to the assigned FCS-PSW, and a copy of the Form 1501 to the CalWORKs EW/ WTW ES within two working days. Send a CalWIN Case Alert to the CalWORKs worker and Supervisor and CalWORKs Social Work Unit Clerk to inform them that the Form 1501 has been sent.
2. Forward one copy of Form 1501 to the CalWORKs Social Work Supervisor if the case is active in CalWORKs.
3. Forward one copy of Form 1501 to the Linkages Coordinator if the case is active in CalWORKs.
4. For potential CalWORKs Family Reunification cases The Foster Care Application Coordinator will fill out Section 2 of Form 1501 and will distribute as above.
5. Upon receipt of the Foster Care Change Notice, Form 1502, complete a case search of CalWORKs and CAAP status and forward copies of Form 1502 to the CalWORKs and CAAP worker, if applicable.

2. Coordinated Service Delivery for CalWORKs Reunification Cases

The following actions must be completed to request and coordinate continuing CalWORKs services for Family Reunification families. The responsibilities involved are described for Family & Children Services- Protective Service Worker FCS-PSW and CalWORKs workers.

a) Protective Service Worker's Responsibilities

Refer to "FCS Handbook Section 54-3, AB429-CalWORKs/Family Reunification Cases" for more information.

b) Responsibilities of the CalWORKs Staff

CalWORKs Reunification cases, in general though not always, may be on discontinued or inactive status in CalWIN. Even though cash aid has been discontinued, CalWORKs supportive services will continue for CalWORKs Family Reunification cases.

3. Prior to Initial Linkages Case Coordination Meeting

A. Upon receipt of Forms 1501 and 8102 from FCS, CalWORKs EW staff shall:

1. Discontinue the cash aid with appropriate notice if no eligible children are left in the home and maintain WTW programs.
2. Convert PAFS to Transitional Food Stamps case and issue all other services as requested. (See "How to's" posted on Intranet)
3. Notify CalWORKs client about the case status, the possible continuance of CalWORKs services, and refer client to CAAP.
4. Give copies of 1501 and 8102 to assigned WTW-ES. If there is no assigned WTW ES then ask clerk to assign WTW-ES and provide to newly assigned ES copies of 1501 and 8102

B. CalWORKs WTW Staff shall:

1. If an eligible child or children are left in the home, but there is a zero cash grant due to income, notify the parent(s) that Supportive Services will be issued through CalWORKs.
2. Request from records management the client's case file to be used at ongoing case planning and coordination
3. WTW-ES keeps the case as long as it is in Family Reunification status, including any extensions.
4. Continue all the CalWORKs services being requested by the FCS-PSW on the CalWORKs Reunification Services Request for a period of up to 180 days from the separation date. A CalWORKs Reunification case will be 180 days from separation date and may be extended. The table below explains who is eligible for CalWORKs Family Reunification service:

Type of Cases	Eligibility for Reunification Services
Non-Needy Payee	No
Timed Out	No
SSI Recipients	No
Undocumented	No
Excluded	No
Penalty	Yes
Exempt	Yes - (Exempt cases must be transferred to CalWORKs/WtW ES in order for services to be provided)
Sanctioned	Yes
All cases carried by the ES	Yes

4. After Initial Linkages Case Coordination Meeting

1. Make referrals for CalWORKs supportive services requested by the FCS-PSW that are not currently provided.
2. Monitor participation in requested CalWORKs services
3. Coordinate services for the family by working closely with the Linkages Coordinator and the FCS-PSW.
4. Participate in follow up Linkages Case Coordination meetings or other joint case staffing as scheduled.
5. Amend welfare-to-work plan, if applicable, to include all or part of the activities of the required FR plan
6. Initiate monthly contacts with the FCS-PSW to discuss progress of client's participation in FR services and WtW plan, if applicable.
7. Form 1502 indicates reunification of children with parents or caretakers. Upon receipt of Form 1502, refer client to intake as soon as PSW recommends that child be placed back in the home. Doing CalWORKs intake before child/ren return home will ensure that no break in aid occurs.

5. Linkages Coordinator's Responsibilities

- The Linkages Coordinator sends e-mail alerts, facilitates and monitors the processing of AB 429 cases.
- The Linkages Coordinator sends e-mail alerts to CalWORKs and FCS staff when a copy of the 1501 is received from Foster Care indicating separation of children from CalWORKs case. E-mail shall alert staff in both programs about potential eligibility for CalWORKs Reunification services, the steps to be followed by FCS-PSW to request CalWORKs supportive services, and the procedural steps to be followed to coordinate services between CalWORKs, FCS and CAAP. For case specific questions about AB 429 contact Linkages Coordinator.

- Track compliance with AB 429 regulations by preparing a monthly tracking report of all potential AB 429 cases. The report shall indicate status of each AB 429 case and compliance on the part of all assigned workers.

V. Reporting and Redetermination Requirements

1. Quarterly Reporting

A CalWORKs reunification parent is required to submit a QR 7 if he or she is receiving TFS. If the AU reports changes resulting in loss of eligibility during the Quarter, the Eligibility Worker (EW)/ Employment Specialist WTW-ES will follow QR regulations.

CalWORKs Family Reunification parent(s) are not required to submit a QR 7 for cash during the period when the case is in FR status.

2. Six-Month Eligibility Redetermination

An eligibility redetermination for CalWORKs reunification services should be completed at six-month intervals in coordination with court review hearing dates. If the annual eligibility redetermination was due at the time of removal, the redetermination should be postponed to coincide with court hearings. If court review intervals are extended beyond the six months or shortened, the eligibility determination should be changed to coincide with the court date.

Follow-up LCCMs shall be held prior to all court hearings, including hearings to determine the return of children.

3. Eligibility Redetermination Calculation

The following calculation shall be used to determine income eligibility, in the context of no cash aid payment, at the six-month redetermination:

1. Determine the AU that includes the eligible parent or parents, any remaining children, if applicable, and each child who has been placed in out-of-home care and considered temporarily absent.
2. Determine the AU's Net Nonexempt Income (NNI) after applying all disregards
3. Compare the NNI to the MAP for the family size
4. If the NNI does not exceed the MAP, the AU would remain eligible for continued CalWORKs FR services.

Example: Client works full time earning \$775 per month. She has two children who are placed in out-of-home care. There is no need to average her income since it is received monthly and is expected to remain the same throughout the QR payment quarter. No other income was reported.

\$775	Averaged Monthly Earned Income
- 225	<u>Income Disregard</u>
\$550	Earned Income
- 275	<u>50% Earned Income Disregard</u>
\$275	Total Net Nonexempt Income (NNI)
\$723	Nonexempt MAP for 3

Compare the MAP for 3 (\$273) to the NNI (\$285). Since the NNI does not exceed the MAP, the AU remains eligible for CalWORKs services but not a cash grant.

1. Eligibility determination after Family Reunification occurs

CalWORKs eligibility determination shall be required to restore cash aid to the CalWORKs case when a family is reunified after the children are returned to the home.

Once the children have returned, Foster Care Eligibility Unit clerk will forward a copy of Form 1502 to the assigned CalWORKs reunification worker and also to the CAAP worker if the parent(s) were receiving CAAP assistance during the reunification period.

1. For parent(s) without CAAP cash assistance: upon receipt Form 1502, the assigned CalWORKs worker will send out a renewal packet and will meet face-to-face with the family to review the SAWS 2. Once the family is found to be eligible for CalWORKs, the beginning date for re-issuance of cash benefits is the first day of the month following the return of the child or children to the home.
2. For parents with CAAP cash assistance: If the parent(s) were receiving CAAP cash assistance during the reunification period, CalWORKs cash assistance shall be reinstated after discontinuance of CAAP assistance. CAAP assistance can be discontinued mid-month or end of the month with a ten-day notice and on any date upon client request without a ten-day notice.
3. When the CAAP discontinuance occurs mid-month or any date during the month, the portion of CAAP cash benefits for the month is budgeted to determine the CalWORKs cash benefit. Once the likely date of return of children are known, the CalWORKs WTW ES should inform the parent to request CAAP discontinuance so that CalWORKs cash aid can be restored after CAAP is discontinued.

2. Good Cause Extensions of the 180-day Period

AB 429 allows for continued CalWORKs services during a 180-day period. Good Cause extension of this period may be granted in two situations:

1. When the court ordered six-month reunification plan begins some time after the child's removal and the plan will then extend beyond the initial 180 days of removal, an extension can be granted.
2. A Good Cause extension may also be granted when the PSW determines that additional time is necessary to complete the court-ordered reunification plan and as long as the family reunification plan remains in effect.

VI. WTW Sanctions, Work Participation Requirements and Exceptions

A. Welfare-to-Work Sanctions

Individuals who have received a WtW sanction, including a second or third instance sanction, are not precluded from receiving CalWORKs services for purposes of FR, and may participate immediately regardless of the time remaining in the sanction period.

Participation also counts toward any required sanction period, since an individual is not receiving a cash grant while receiving CalWORKs services under a FR plan. Individuals who fail to participate in WtW activities or any other activities required under the FR plan are not subject to the WtW non-compliance or sanctioning process. CalWORKs services that are part of an individual's FR plan shall be provided to these individuals until the FR plan is terminated by the CWW.

B. Work Participation Requirements

When any client volunteers to participate in a WtW plan, the court-ordered reunification plan could be used in lieu of the WtW plan and non-compliance/sanction process would not apply. When the court-ordered reunification plan is used in lieu of the WtW plan, the client must be noticed in writing that the FR plan will take the place of the WtW plan. If the participant has signed a WtW plan, the court-ordered reunification requirements could become part of the WtW plan, and the non-compliance/sanction process apply, but only to the work and training activities. Even when sanctioned, the FR case will remain an active CalWORKs case and support services must be continued.

C. Welfare-to-Work Good Cause Exemption

CalWORKs services are provided in conjunction with child welfare services as part of the FR plan. If participation in activities required under the FR plan interferes with an individual's ability to comply with the WtW hours of participation requirements, the parent must be granted Good Cause for not participating in his or her WtW activities.

VII. Time Limits

A. CW 60 Months

Supportive Services would not be counted toward the CW 60-month time limit as no cash assistance is being issued.

B. TANF 60 Months

1. Supportive services that are provided by TANF funds to an unemployed parent are considered "assistance" and count toward the federal TANF 60-month time clock, as long as services are being provided.
2. Supportive services that are provided to an employed parent are not considered "assistance" and do not count toward the federal TANF 60-month time clock.
3. A service/payment that is intended to meet recurrent and ongoing needs and provides for needs that extend for more than four months, is considered "assistance" whether or not the parent is employed. Therefore, any month in which that type of service/payment is provided would count toward the federal TANF 60-month time clock.
 - A service/payment that provides for the need for a period that is four months or less, is not considered "assistance" and would not count toward the federal TANF 60-month time clock.

VIII. CalWIN Process

For the "How to's" cheat sheets that gives the step-by-step process to set up supportive services in CalWIN, please go to the following link: [http://CalWIN \"How To's\" for CalWORKs Family Reunification \(AB429\)\HSAintranet/html](http://CalWIN \).

IX. Forms

Form #	Form Name	Purpose	Language
1501	Placement Notification	Initiated by the PSW after removal of children to alert the Foster Care unit	
1502	Foster Care Change Notice	Initiated by the PSW to notify the Foster Care Unit about a change of placement including return of child(ren) to parent	
8102	CalWORKs Reunification Services Request	Utilized by PSW worker for requesting CalWORKs services	

Note: State forms can also be found on the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Website at: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/PG19.htm>.

If a specific form or language translation of the form is not linked, please click on this link: [HSA CalWORKs Forms on-line](#). or access Forms Central at the HSA intranet site. Please note that some forms may not be available in language translation at this time. Please check appropriate shelves for related forms.