

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO COLLABORATE IN YOUR COUNTY

Collaboration is effective, it's efficient and it's essential! Counties across California are coming together to implement strategies and activities to improve collaboration between CalWORKs and Child Welfare programs – collaboration that improves client services as well as the program bottom line. Children and families benefit when programs work together.

Listed below are activities that are specific, concrete and doable, especially in tough budget times. Many counties are implementing these steps, finding that working together across programs that have a common mission is more essential than ever.

What Directors and Managers Can Do:

- **Create a shared vision** – Work to create a shared vision between CalWORKs and Child Welfare, emphasizing the link between poverty and child maltreatment and how each program's success is dependent on the other when there are mutual clients. Stress the values that are common to both programs.
- **Create an environment or structure that enables program collaboration** – Support collaboration by enabling its success. Ensure an openness and commitment to working across programs by supporting coordinated case planning, the inclusion of CalWORKs expertise at Team Decision Meetings and Family Group Conferencing, the development of single case plans for families and addressing child welfare requirements in mutual clients' Welfare to Work plans.
- **Ensure common policies and procedures** – Make sure there are consistent policies and procedures in place for both CalWORKs and Child Welfare to help programs work together to serve mutual clients.
- **Co-locate child welfare and CalWORKs staff** – Enable staff who serve mutual clients to work together, whether that means placing a child welfare social worker in a CalWORKs office or a CalWORKs job specialist in a child welfare office.
- **Create Linkages teams** – Designate staff in both CalWORKs and Child Welfare programs to handle mutual cases and do coordinated case planning and case management.
- **Champion service coordination** – Support faster and better connections for families to needed services whether the families' case originates in CalWORKs or Child Welfare. Support improved service coordination through the integration of CalWORKs expertise into Multidisciplinary Team Meetings and the implementation of Assembly Bill 429, which enables families who are on CalWORKs at the time children are removed to continue to receive services such as substance abuse treatment, mental health services, domestic violence services and housing.
- **Promote joint and cross-trainings** – Make sure that trainings that foster a better understanding and appreciation of the challenges clients face happen jointly with CalWORKs and Child Welfare staff. Coordinated case planning trainings provide excellent opportunities for both joint and cross-training.
- **Ensure accountability** – Require staff to report on their efforts to collaborate across programs as well as to identify ongoing barriers that require additional help or support.

- **Reward activities in both programs** – Make sure that good work in both CalWORKs and Child Welfare programs is recognized and rewarded, and constantly reinforce the value of collaboration.
- **Promote evaluation** – Create the capacity, as well as the expectation, for evaluating the impact of collaboration. Require results to be monitored and shared.

What Staff Can Do:

- **Check to see if a family is already receiving services** – Check data systems from the beginning to see if a family is already involved with the other program and receiving services. In Child Welfare, doing this before an emergency response worker begins an investigation or before a first Team Decision Meeting provides a jumpstart on collaboration and the ability to know the services that can be offered to help a family right away. For CalWORKs clients, check to see if a family is eligible for supportive services through Child Welfare.
- **Contact the caseworker to streamline working together** – Contact the CalWORKs or Child Welfare caseworker to determine the most efficient way of working together for the family as soon as you know a family is open to receiving services from the other program.
- **Invite CalWORKs staff to Team Decision Meetings and Family Group Conferencing** – Make sure that CalWORKs caseworkers are included in meetings where children’s safety is being discussed. CalWORKs staff can become a major voice in whether supports can be put in place to help ensure a safe and stable environment.
- **Hold coordinated case planning meetings** – Help ensure that families who receive both CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services benefit from coordinated case planning. Reach out to caseworkers and make collaboration happen.
- **Conduct joint case reviews** – Work together to review common cases to see where there is an opportunity for services and to specify the services that each program will provide. Document in the case plan what each program will do to ensure clarity and accountability.
- **Connect to services** – Connect CalWORKs families who have child welfare referrals to early intervention services such as those provided through Differential Response (Path 1) community-based providers.
- **Attend trainings** – Be sure to attend trainings that increase your understanding of the common challenges faced by families who receive CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services and to learn more about each other’s programs. Take advantage of the opportunity for cross training, especially in the area of coordinated case planning.
- **Share information** – Inform your colleague in the other program if changes happen in a family, including address changes which are good to check every time you contact a family.
- **Take credit for your work** – Make sure information is entered into databases and track by outcomes so that you’re able to show the impact of collaboration. Once results are known, promote what you know and recognize those who have played leading roles.
- **Advocate for policy and management changes that support collaboration** – Use your staff voice to support implementation of the activities listed above to help ensure that your county is doing everything possible to achieve better outcomes for the children and families you serve.