

KEEPING LINKED

A PUBLICATION OF CFPIC'S FEDERAL LINKAGES PROJECT
LINKAGES: CALWORKS AND CHILD WELFARE COLLABORATION TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES

MAY 2009

Tips From the Top: Insights and Advice From Linkages Leaders

by Leslie Ann Hay, MSW

How has leadership influenced the success of Linkages? This was the topic of a set of interviews conducted earlier this year. Linkages leaders from around the state described the innovations, bright ideas and personal management styles that led to Linkages successes. In the collaborative spirit of the project, these leaders have pooled their wisdom, in the form of insights and advice. Everyone working in Linkages, from both sides of the aisle, can find guidance and innovation in these tips from the top.

Be the standard bearer: Carry the Linkages torch proudly! Maintaining a strong belief in the initiative and an investment in its successes helps convey to staff your commitment to its outcomes. Whenever possible, visibly demonstrate the vision and rationale of the initiative, in your partnerships, communication style and priorities.

State your values, again: Repeat the values and benefits of Linkages over and over again. Help it sink in as a integral way of doing the work; less an external mandate than a living, evolving approach that supports and feeds the larger goals of the organization.

Trust your leaders: Empower your staff to take responsibility, make decisions, own a piece of the work. Open avenues that encourage innovation and endorse those who follow through with successes. Acknowledge them as often as you can.

Be present: Stay up-to-date with the advances and challenges of the initiative. Know what's coming up for your own organization's Linkages advances as well as for the organization's with whom you're partnering.

Listen deeply: Your team is its own wealth of information. Listen carefully to their ideas, suggestions and complaints. Hear the wisdom of embedded in their perspectives. After setting parameters, sit back and allow your staff to draw their own conclusions. Ask critical and clarifying questions before giving advice, taking action or coming to your own conclusions.

Bust barriers: As the executive, you have the power to open doors and dismantle obstacles, creating new possibilities for problem-solving. Make it clear that you're willing to break silos: demonstrate your understanding that many habits and assumptions about how things are done are more historical than real.

Start with small wins: Take the right-sized first bite. Target collaboration opportunities that already exist, using natural footholds like coordinating TDMs. Make your first undertaking be fully achievable, then tout the success and move on to the next small bite.

Keep tight partnerships: Demonstrate the nature of Linkages by keeping a high degree of collaboration at the executive level of CalWORKs and CWS. Mirror the partnership that needs to happen at the front line by create new solutions together, embracing and understanding each other's overall missions, then supporting those goals in your collaborations.

Recognize your power as a manager to make things happen, then empower the people who are doing the real work come up with the best solutions.

Julie Hornback, Fresno County

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March Topic of Interest Call—Budget Impacts to Linkages

Eight of our Linkages counties (Alameda, Fresno, Kern, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Stanislaus, Sutter and Tulare) participated on the April Budget Impacts call along with CFPIC Project staff and CDSS staff. This Topic call was scheduled to give Coordinators the opportunity to share experiences and ideas for addressing any impacts to their Linkages initiative as a result of the budget. Several counties reported how staffs were feeling stressed by the number of layoffs in the county and waiting for the next round of cuts due to more budget cuts. This leaves a feeling of unrest and difficulty for staff to focus on programs.

One county mentioned that the impact has been with their community partners. The budget cuts have resulted in staff shortages and thus, they have had a difficult time participating on TDM's as well as having service slots available for clients. Another county mentioned that staff only

want to focus on “mandates” and see Linkages as “something extra”. Another issue mentioned was that while this county was having minimum cuts, they still have had to “tighten” their belt and so have used the opportunity to do some changes in how they have structured services.

We discussed the need to support the message that coordination shouldn't be a “burden” rather it should be an opportunity to streamline casework through collaboration to better serve families and to share the “burden”.

The difficult task for Coordinators and the leadership of the agency is to keep the Vision and the Key message in the forefront:

These really tough budget time with decreased resources is exactly the time to coordinate and to share services and resources between programs.

Tips From the Top

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Consider Linkages as helpful in lean times: Linkages can strengthen services in lean budget times. As a leader, you can set the tone that in a resource-scarce environment, partnering deliberately with the other side of the house keeps everyone better served. Linkages isn't fueled by money, it's run on partnerships.

The recent budget climate we're facing has only strengthened Linkages as a way to maximize resources and utilize each other more deliberately.

Ana Pagan, Merced County

No two Linkages are alike, as every county's CalWORKs/Child Welfare partnership has its own flavor. Similarly, every Linkages leader will have his or her own personal style, organizational priorities and ways of relating to staff. As your organization moves ahead in its Linkages partnerships, or as your county approaches implementing Linkages, consider these morsels of Linkages leadership wisdom. The opportunity for creativity and innovation is as limitless as the Linkages partnerships themselves.

Thanks to the following Linkages leaders for contributing to this article: **Phil Ansell** (Los Angeles County DPSS), **Howard Hines** (Fresno County Child Welfare Department), **Julie Hornback** (Fresno County CalWORKs Division), **Ana Pagan** (Merced County Human Services Agency).

Case Managers Report on Linkages

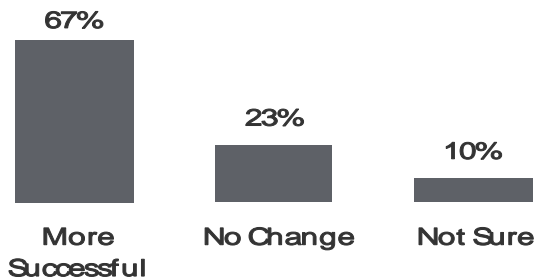
Highlights from the Winter 2009 Staff Survey

In early 2009, the Statewide Linkages evaluation team conducted a staff survey to hear from both Child Welfare and CalWORKs case managers about their Linkages experiences with case coordination and direct work with families. Linkages counties from the Pioneer and Phase II cohorts were asked to participate because Linkages implementation in those counties has likely been in place long enough to give case managers substantial experience with Linkages cases. Case managers were not identified by name on the survey, and they individually mailed or faxed completed surveys back to the evaluation team for purposes of confidentiality. Responses were received from 61 individuals in 24 counties, providing a 91 percent response rate. Approximately half of the respondents were Child Welfare workers and half were CalWORKs workers.

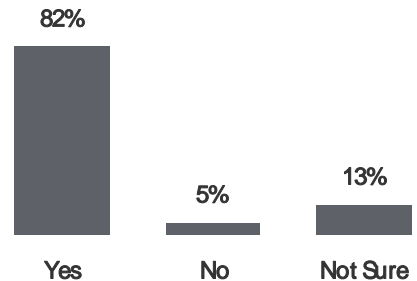
Case Managers Generally Feel Positive about Linkages

A majority of survey respondents reported that Linkages has had positive impacts on their jobs and their clients. When asked how Linkages has affected their ability to be successful with clients, two thirds reported that Linkages allowed them to be “more successful” with their clients, and none reported that they were “less successful.” Over three quarters (82 percent) stated they felt that Linkages improves outcomes for families. In addition, 64 percent said Linkages had made them “more satisfied” with their work.

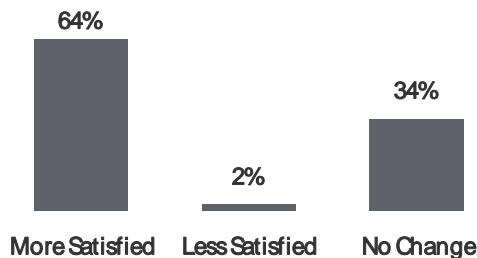
How has Linkages affected your ability to be successful with clients? (n=60)



Do you feel that Linkages improves outcomes for families?



How has being a part of a Linkages team changed your personal satisfaction with your work? (n=61)

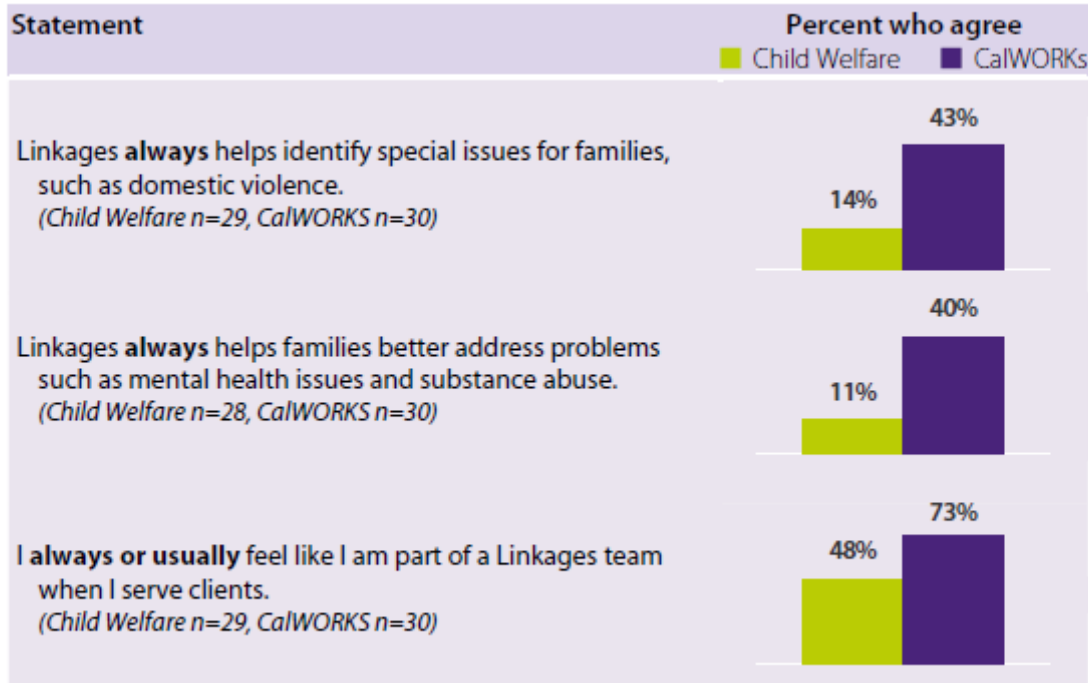


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Case Managers Report on Linkages

More CalWORKs Respondents Report Linkages Benefits than Child Welfare Respondents

Interestingly, a higher percentage of CalWORKs respondents tended to report seeing benefits of Linkages than child welfare respondents. Some of the more striking examples follow:



Further Opportunities

The Staff Survey identified a few areas where Linkages practices may have room for improvement. The two clearest challenges were in the areas of identifying mutual clients and increased workload as a result of Linkages. These findings are offered as opportunities for further consideration by counties and statewide Linkages as implementation progresses.

Only 7 percent of child welfare respondents and 3 percent of CalWORKs respondents reported that they are informed of mutually-served clients by a flag or label in their computer data system. Case workers named other ways that they identify mutually-served clients, including asking the client, finding out during Linkages team meetings, conducting a cross-check themselves, or hearing from other staff who cross-check. This finding indicates that there may be more room to streamline through automated case matching.

One fifth (20 percent) of all respondents reported that—at least sometimes—Linkages increases their workload for no apparent benefit. With the heavy workloads that case managers bear regardless of Linkages, the program's success may rely in part on case workers feeling that any additional work due to Linkages has benefits for themselves and the families they serve.

For additional results from the Winter 2009 Staff Survey, visit the County Linkage Tools: Evaluation link in the Documents section of the Linkages intranet site. If you have questions about any of these findings, please contact **Katherine Lee at 530-757-8420 or klee@harderco.com.**

The ARRA of 2009



On February 17, 2009, the President signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 which established the Emergency Contingency Fund for State TANF Programs. This legislation provides up to \$5 Billion to help States in FY 2009 and FY 2010 and it also made additional changes to TANF including expanding flexibility in the use of TANF funds carried from one fiscal year to the next, and adding a hold-harmless provision to the caseload reduction credit for States and Territories serving more TANF families. The total available to California is \$1.8 billion across FFY 2009 and FFY 2010.

The Emergency Fund is intended to build upon and renew the principles of work and responsibility that underlie successful welfare reform. These funds are subject to the same TANF requirements and time limits as the Federal TANF block grant. At this time, the County

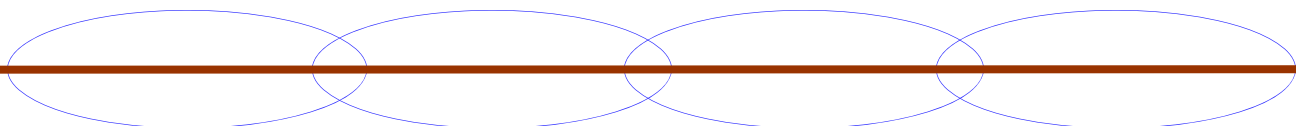
Welfare Director's Association's (CWDA) Self-Sufficiency and Fiscal Committees have been meeting to share ideas across the State for possible ways the Counties might be able to utilize these new funds. The Power-Point from the joint April 16th, 2009 meeting is posted on the Discussion Board under Emergency Contingency Fund.

Some of the information shared at the April 16 meeting included:

- The funding requires a 20% match which must be TANF or Maintenance of Effort (MOE)-eligible and it can be provided by 3rd Party Match subject to ACF-TANF Policy Announcement 2004-01 (posted on the Linkages Intranet)
- Allowable Activities include
 - ◊ Basic Assistance , but not including child care, transportation, or other supportive services. Non-recurring short-term benefits (Diversion) are allowable
 - ◊ Subsidized employment
- Eligible families include
 - ◊ CalWORKs participants, sanctioned participants, adults on safety net cases where children are still aided, and Kin-GAP

One of the exciting ideas that was shared at this meeting is the possibility of funding parents' "basic assistance" for a short time while their children have been removed in order to keep the parent financially stable and to implement and expedite Family Reunification. This is a perfect Linkages strategy and can help counties implement AB 429 which, under State law, allows for the continuation of services such as substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence services. With the ECF, the county could keep Basic Assistance going to the parent. Another way these funds might support Linkages is through the implementation or expansion of Parent Partner programs that create and sustain these "jobs" as subsidized employment.

We will keep you apprised of the information being shared at these Joint CWDA Self-Sufficiency and Fiscal meetings that will be held over the next two months. Please share your ideas by going to the Linkages Intranet and click on the 2009 Discussion Board. If you are not registered, talk to your County Coordinator about how to get registered.



It Just Makes Sense

To Attend the May Mini Convenings!

- What:** Linkages Project May Mini Convenings
- When:** North May 19, 2009-Hampton Inn Red Bluff
Bay/Central May 20, 2009-Hilton Concord
South May 21, 2009-Doubletree Anaheim
- Times:** 8:00 am to 9:00 am Continental Breakfast
9:00 am to 4:15 pm Convening
Including sessions on: Work Plan FY 09/10; Family Engagement through Linkages Guidelines; Data Tracking and an afternoon of Brainstorming/
Discussion on issues such as: Family meetings, Common cases, Linkages with clients not eligible for CalWORKs, Fiscal/Budget, Joint Service Plans, Differential Response, and Separate Agencies/
Separate Departments within Agencies
- Who:** Attendees should include members of the counties Linkages Planning/Implementation Team
- Cost:** CFPIC Linkages Project will pay for the cost of travel including mileage. Carpools are encouraged. If members of your Linkage team needs a sleeping room please contact Danna Fabella to discuss at Danna.fabella@cfpic.org.
- Registration** Registration information has been sent to the Team Leaders. They will be responsible for signing up their teams.
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UPDATES...UPDATES...UPDATES...UPDATES

Topic of Interest Calls:

Please use 866-210-1669
Code: 5088172 to enter the calls.

May 13th 8:30 a.m. Client Success Stories with Jill Duerr-Berrick
June 10th 8:30 a.m. Work Plan with Leslie Ann Hay

Self-Assessment

Don't forget to complete the Self Assessment so that you can work from that at the May Mini-Convening during the Work Planning presentation.

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Child & Family Policy Institute of California

The Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC) is a private non-profit organization incorporated in 2004 as a 501 (c) 3 entity under the auspices of the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA). The purpose of the CFPIC is to “advance the development of sound public policy and promote program excellence in county Human Services Agencies through research, education, training and technical assistance.”

Linkages is a strategic effort by thirty-three California’s counties to improve coordination between CalWORKS and Child Welfare through development of county specific work plans and leadership. The initiative is supported by CFPIC through trainings, convenings, peer support and technical assistance. These supports initially received private foundation funding and are currently funded through a Federal Grant and the California Department of Social Services.