CalWORKs System Improvement Plan (Cal-SIP) Report

County: San Francisco

Contents

Executive Summary

1. Please summarize the performance measures selected for improvement.

San Francisco County will focus on the Engagement Rate and Rate of Program Reentries.

2. Please provide a comprehensive list of improvement strategies identified within the Cal-SIP.

San Francisco County seeks to improve their performance by implementing the following strategies:

Goal 1: Increase Engagement Rate to 24% from 21%. Review using Cal-OAR Dashboard improving by 1.0% every 12 months within 3 years (for a total of a 3.0% improvement).

- Strategy 1: Improve client connection to training and educational opportunities (With 5 Action Steps).
- Strategy 2: Conduct focused outreach on client populations with low engagement rates (With 5 Action Steps).
- Strategy 3: Promote coaching and goal-planning case management approaches (With 5 Action Steps).
- Strategy 4: Make communications materials more informative and motivational (With 5 Action Steps).
- Strategy 5: Update performance management system to improve consistency in working with clients (With 5 Action Steps)

Goal 2: Decrease Rate of Program Reentries to 20% from 22%. Review using Cal-OAR Dashboard improving by 0.7% every 12 months within 3 years (for a total of a 2.0% improvement)

- Strategy 1: Create incentives for clients who discontinue from CalWORKs financial assistance due to employment (With 3 Action Steps).
- Strategy 2: Expand and improve case management during post-CalWORKs job retention services (With 4 Action Steps).
- Strategy 3: Improve quality of post-CalWORKs resource information (With 3 Action Steps).
- Strategy 4: Monitor data on the rate of reentries and employment incentives to determine if there are demographic disparities between families who reenter the program or received employment incentives compared to those who did not; take action if disparities exist (With 4 Action Steps)

Introduction

The Cal-OAR is a local, data-driven program management system that facilitates continuous improvement of county CalWORKs programs by collecting, analyzing, and disseminating outcomes and best practices. As required by Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 11523, Cal-OAR consists of three core components: performance indicators, a county CalWORKs self-assessment (Cal-CSA), and a CalWORKs system improvement plan (Cal-SIP).

The Cal-OAR continuous quality improvement (Cal-CQI) process (which includes the Cal-CSA and Cal-SIP) will take place over five-year cycles. The first Cal-OAR cycle commences on July 1, 2021, with the implementation of Cal-OAR. The Cal-SIP is the second component of the Cal-OAR CQI process. The Cal-SIP is based on the information gathered and reported from the Cal-CSA, each CWD will develop a plan for improving their CalWORKs program. The Cal-SIP will select a measure or set of measures for focused improvements and development to improve the selected performance measures while pairing each Cal-SIP goal with an equity goal and/ or strategy

1. Describe your approach to the Cal-SIP Report

Following completion of the County Self-Assessment, the San Francisco Human Services Agency (SF HSA) assembled a team to develop the goals, strategies, and action steps for the Cal-SIP Report. This team was composed of the CalWORKs Director, the Senior Analyst responsible for Cal-OAR, and a Cal-OAR Steering Committee composed of senior SFHSA management, with support from a contractor, the Public Consulting Group (PCG). Feedback and ideas were also collected from staff following All-Staff Meetings, as well as external partners and stakeholders.

We began our Cal-SIP efforts by taking stock of the problems and issues that were identified during development of our County Self-Assessment. Overall, we concluded in our County Self-Assessment and review of data in the Cal-OAR Data Dashboard that our Engagement Rate is not as high as we would like it to be, and San Francisco has generally had a higher rate of program reentries compared to state averages. We shared findings and issues raised in our Self-Assessment with our peer review partner and with staff at All-Staff meetings. In addition, we shared issues with members of San Francisco's Welfare-to-Work Oversight Committee, comprised of representatives from organizations and city agencies that we partner with in the CalWORKs program. At each of these meetings, we asked our peer review partner, staff, and external stakeholders about priorities to focus on and ideas on how we can make improvements to address the issues that were identified. In general, our internal and external stakeholders were in agreement that improving the Engagement Rate and reducing Reentry to CalWORKs were high-priority areas to focus on. Through our various meetings, we also gathered ideas on strategies to improve our performance in these measures.

We then held numerous internal meetings with our consultants from PCG, where we took stock of the ideas that were presented and brainstormed additional improvement ideas. Our Cal-SIP ultimately reflects many of the ideas raised that we thought we could feasibly implement within the timeframe of the current Cal-OAR cycle.

2. Briefly describe past and current system improvement efforts.

Below are some of the changes we've made in the past few years:

We moved from a task-based to a case management model for all CalWORKs cases over the past 5 years, completing the transition in early 2022, when Eligibility staff were assigned to be case managers for families newly applying for CalWORKs and continuing child-only cases. Welfare-to-Work cases have been assigned to Employment Specialists to manage both clients' eligibility and employment services for the past several years.

We recently established new partnerships to expand vocational training opportunities for clients in construction and culinary fields. In addition, in March 2022, we began offering clients incentives when they complete an OCAT appraisal and develop a Welfare-to-Work or Family Stabilization Plan. Specifically, they can receive $100 when they complete an OCAT appraisal and $100 when they complete a plan. To further promote staff engagement using CalWORKs 2.0 principles and methods, we created a "Goal Setting" activity to help staff launch discussions of short- or long-term goals, and to encourage development of plans, activity assignments, and other next steps in line with clients' goals. These goals are documented in CalWIN to allow follow-up by other case managers upon case transfers.

In the summer of 2022, SFHSA implemented changes to the JobsNOW! program to help improve clients' connection to this job search/job readiness activity, as well as to improve communication between case workers in CalWORKs and the Workforce Development Division. Specifically, we implemented 3 meetings: (1) an initial onboarding meeting between the client, their CalWORKs case manager, and a Workforce Development staff when the client is referred to the activity to provide clients with an overview of JobsNOW! and what to expect, (2) a case conference 4 weeks later between the CalWORKs and Workforce Development case manager to discuss the clients' progress and next steps, and (3) an exit meeting between the client and case managers in both CalWORKs and Workforce Development to discuss the clients' accomplishments and progress while in the JobsNOW! activity and their next steps. In addition, Workforce Development case managers began to review clients' OCAT appraisals to better understand their background, career goals, and barriers, so that they can better identify job openings that may be a good match and help the client navigate the job search and application process.

In the summer of 2022, we also co-located some CalWORKs and Workforce Development staff at the San Francisco Employment Development Department (EDD) office. This gave us a physical presence in the Western Addition and Russian/Nob Hill neighborhoods to be more accessible to families living in the northern side of the city. It also furthers partnerships with EDD programs, such as Unemployment Insurance, veteran’s workforce programs, and state disability programs.

San Francisco is also transitioning into the CalSAWS system in October 2023. Currently, we are heavily engaged in business process redesign and staff training to prepare for CalSAWS.

3. Briefly describe the success or failure of those efforts at improving service delivery or programmatic outcomes.

Thus far, the transition to a case management model for child-only CalWORKs cases has gone smoothly. This has reduced the number of hand-offs between staff when serving clients, compared to a task-based model.

Our new vocational training partnerships have resulted in a few referrals to culinary and construction training programs. Our Cal-SIP will include monitoring clients’ enrollment and progress in these and other educational programs.

With regard to incentives for completing OCATs and plans, the OCAT/Appraisal Timeliness Rate has been consistently much higher than statewide, though with some fluctuations – for example, 50.0% in July and 65.6% in December 2022, compared to about 30% statewide in those months. We cannot necessarily attribute the high rate to the incentive, since our rate was about equally high prior to their implementation. However, our staff have found incentives to be a helpful tool in encouraging client participation. With regard to incentives for creating Welfare-to-Work plans, we have not found evidence of these helping to improve client engagement after implementation; however, the timeframe coincided with a high vacancy rate among Employment Specialists which made consistent client engagement difficult.

We have not yet seen that the new "Goal Setting" activity or changes made to the JobsNOW program have led to increased Engagement Rates or effects in other Cal-OAR performance measures, since implementation of these new efforts coincided with high vacancy rates last year that made it difficult for case workers to implement them for many of their cases. Anecdotally, we have heard from some case workers that the goal-setting activity was beneficial in helping them incorporate coaching and goal planning practices in their conversations and case management with clients, and the changes in the JobsNOW program improved communication between CalWORKs and Workforce Development case workers.

4. An overview of the CWD’s organizational vision and mission (optional).

The San Francisco Human Services Agency is committed to delivering essential services that support and protect people, families, and communities. The CalWORKs program within SFHSA provides families with financial assistance, food support, health insurance, employment services, and more, to improve their well-being and advance economic opportunities.

Organizationally, SFHSA is comprised of 2 departments: The Department of Benefits and Family Support (BFS), and Department of Disability and Aging Services (DAS). Within the Department of Benefits and Family Support, the Economic Support and Self-Sufficiency Division (ESSS) promotes the wellbeing of San Francisco's most vulnerable populations by providing a safety net of public supports, including CalFresh, Medi-Cal, CalWORKs, County Adult Assistance Programs, and Workforce Development services. Within ESSS, CalWORKs and Workforce Development programs are housed together in the same organizational structure called the Welfare-to-Work Services Division to encourage close collaboration. While the CalWORKs program assists families with CalWORKs, CalFresh, and Medi-Cal benefits, Workforce Development staff identify job opportunities for CalWORKs and other ESSS clients and manage contracts with community partners to deliver a variety of services.

Section 1: Measures for Improvement and Strategies

Part 1: Measure and Goal Narrative

1. Describe the reason for selecting the measure or programmatic grouping of measures.

We selected Engagement Rate because it was most likely to be impacted by a range of strategies that SFHSA is planning to implement to address issues identified in the County Self-Assessment, such as lack of awareness of services and resources available, desire for more activities to help clients advance their careers, need for improvement in the quality of communication materials, and inconsistency in case management. In addition, San Francisco's Engagement Rate has been lower than statewide rates in the most recent months available (as of September 2022).

We selected Rate of Program Reentries because during development of the County Self-Assessment, we heard concerns about the "benefits cliff" dissuading clients from pursuing employment and career advancement opportunities, and we felt that this was a significant issue to address. In addition, San Francisco's rates are higher than statewide, though we do not have a good understanding of the reasons why. We hope that our strategies related to this measure not only improve the support we provide when families transition off of CalWORKs assistance, but also help to improve our Engagement Rate by eliminating some fears about the benefits cliff. Likewise, we hope that success in the strategies designed to improve engagement will have "downstream" impact on the likelihood that clients who leave CalWORKs maintain jobs and progress in their careers. In addition, both measures selected for improvement include strategies related to communication and informational materials, which are associated with a key observation from partners, staff, and clients regarding information overload.

2. Do partners and collaborators agree this is a measure or programmatic grouping of measures that should be focused on at this time?

Our partners and collaborators are in agreement that Engagement Rate and Rate of Program Reentries are appropriate measures to focus on for improvement in the initial Cal-OAR cycle. We presented on our prioritization of these areas at Welfare-to-Work Oversight Committee meetings in February and June 2023, which many of our partners and collaborators attended. The attendees in general gave us positive feedback on our overall direction and also provided input that was incorporated into our System Improvement Plan.

3. Describe any anticipated interactions with other measures.

The improvement strategies described in this document could potentially impact other measures. For example, our strategy to improve clients' connections to training and educational opportunities could also improve post-CalWORKs employment and wage outcomes, as well as reduce reentry to CalWORKs. Educational advancement is typically associated with improved employment opportunities. If our efforts are able to result in more clients earning degrees and credentials and gaining more knowledge and skills, more clients may have better, more stable employment opportunities that can enable them to remain off of CalWORKs. Similarly, we also hope that our strategy to promote case management practices centered around coaching and goal-setting could help clients address barriers and help them progress toward improved employment and opportunities. The more that we can help clients overcome barriers, the more they can focus their attentions toward education and career advancement opportunities, which ultimately could lead to improved employment and wage outcomes post-CalWORKs.

4. Describe how the CWD will track performance measure improvement.

Overall, we will monitor Cal-OAR Dashboard Data on the performance measures as new data is generated, overall and among sub-populations. In addition, our 2nd strategy is designed to help us identify what works to help engage clients who have been unengaged for 3 months or longer. We will try to utilize random assignment processes into treatment and control groups when possible, to assess effectiveness of strategies. We hope that this will allow us to figure out which strategies are more effective than others for various client populations, and then roll out outreach efforts with a better chance of success in increasing engagement. For our efforts to increase connection to training and educational opportunities, we will be tracking data on the number of clients engaged in educational activities, using CalWIN/CalSAWS data, data from digital learning platforms, as well as data from our county system called Launchpad. The data we gather from supervisory case reviews will also be valuable to inform us of where additional training, staff coaching, or communication efforts may be needed. As we carry out staff training or make improvements on communications materials, we may also monitor data pertinent to those efforts. For example, if we improve a flyer for a particular activity, we may monitor engagement in that activity (using CalWIN/CalSAWS and Launchpad data) to see if the communications effort improved engagement. Overall, by monitoring the Engagement Rate in the Cal-OAR Data Dashboard and also monitoring data on individual strategies, we hope to see if our Engagement Rate is improving, while also knowing which strategies are leading to improvements.

Part 2: Goal-level Descriptions

Goal 1: Increase Engagement Rate to 24% from 21%. Review using Cal-OAR Dashboard improving by 1.0% every 12 months within 3 years (for a total of a 3.0% improvement).

Strategy 1*: Improve client connection to training and educational opportunities*

Strategy 2*: Conduct focused outreach on client populations with low engagement rates*

Strategy 3*: Promote coaching and goal-planning case management approaches*

Strategy 4*: Make communication materials more informative and motivational*

Strategy 5*: Update performance management system to improve consistency in working with clients*

1. Explain the reasoning or methodology which was used to determine this goal.

As noted above, improvement in engagement was a common thread throughout a range of issues documented in the County Self-Assessment. Topics that were raised and discussed in our Self-Assessment included: insufficient options for employment and training activities or lack of awareness about available options; the complexity of information that clients receive throughout their time on CalWORKs and that staff must navigate; technical language used in communication; inconsistency among case managers; and desire among staff for more training on case management practices and working with clients with diverse backgrounds and challenges. In addition, our Engagement Rate in the most recent months that data is available is lower than what we would like it to be.

2. What led the CWD to these improvement strategies?

Several of the strategies we selected were raised in feedback from focus groups during development of our County Self-Assessment, partner and collaborator engagement sessions during development of our System Improvement Plan, and the Peer Review. We selected strategies we hoped would not only increase the Engagement Rate but would also benefit clients' experience in CalWORKs and help them progress toward career advancement. We sought to develop a set of comprehensive strategies that could fit together to improve client engagement. We also identified a strategy to focus specifically on clients who have been unengaged for 3 months or longer and explore more intensive outreach for these clients.

3. Discuss any research or literature that supports the strategies chosen. Cite reference(s), if applicable.

The following are examples of research that suggest that holistic approaches to case management, increasing access to educational/vocational opportunities, employment readiness support, and coaching are ways to increase client engagement:

* Vu, C. M., Anthony, E. K., & Austin, M. J. (2009). Strategies for Engaging Adults in Welfare-to-Work Activities. Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services. https://doi.org/10.1606/1044-3894.3929

* Kauf J., Derr M. K., & Pavetti L. (2004). A study of work participation and full engagement strategies. Mathematica Policy Research. Retrieved June16, 2023, from http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/full-engagement04/report.pdf

* Tassigne, R. (2022, October 19). Uncovering the Evidence for TANF Innovation and Modernization. American Public Human Services Association. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from https://aphsa.org/APHSABlog/TANF-modernization-22/uncovering-the-evidence-for-TANF-innovation.aspx

Additional research has found that poverty and chronic stress impact the brain's ability to plan, pursue, and achieve goals. Coaching and goal planning have been found to be essential in helping clients engage with and succeed in Welfare-to-Work programs. Effective case management includes career navigation and coaching services, starting with assessment of needs and skills. Having the tools to support clients in this process is important:

* Derr, M., McCay, J., & Kauff, J. (2019, February 2). Improving Employment Outcomes: Using Innovative Goal-Oriented Strategies in TANF Programs. Mathematica Policy Research.https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/50020_goals_rb_improving_employment_outcomes_022119_508.pdf

* Murray, D.W., Rosinsky, K., Haas, M., Glosser, A., & Boyd, S. (2022). Applying Human-Centered Design to Human Services: Pilot Study Findings, OPRE Report 2022-214, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

* Deena Schwartz, Karen Gardiner, Kristen Joyce, Sheena McConnell, and Correne Saunders (2020). Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS): Implementation Findings from the Evaluation of Employment Coaching. OPRE Report 2020-177. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS): Implementation Findings from the

Evaluation of Employment Coaching | The Administration for Children and Families (hhs.gov)

* Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations: Evaluation Design Report, OPRE Report #2019-65 and OPRE Report #2021-221. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Due to the negative impacts of stress and poverty on adult's overall functioning, it is important for communication material to be clear, concise, and targeted for the proper audience. Using age-appropriate language, simple and clear sentences, using concrete examples, and highlighting and summarizing important points are all ways to improve communications, for both clients and staff.

(Reference: US Department of Health & Human Services (2021, July 7). Clear Communication. National Institutes of Health. Retrieved June 9, 2023, from https://www.nih.gov/institutes-nih/nih-office-director/office-communications-public-liaison/clear-communication/clear-simple)

4. Describe the roles of each partner and collaborator in implementing the selected strategies.

Strategy 1 on improving client connection to educational and training opportunities will require the greatest degree of cooperation and planning with external partners. We hope to increase referrals to partners' education and training programs. We will work closely with our various partners so that they are aware of our efforts to increase connections to education programs (for example, City College of San Francisco, Office of Economic & Workforce Development, Arriba Juntos, Academy of Truck Driving, One Treasure Island, and Charity Cultural Services Center).

We will utilize our existing processes centered around a data system called Launchpad to make referrals, exchange information, and communicate and collaborate with partners to support clients. We may also collaborate with partners on staff trainings to bring specific activities to case workers' attention and market them to clients. This may include inviting partners to All Staff meetings to provide information on their activities, as well as to provide venues to discuss best practices for making referrals, sharing information, and communicating and collaborating.

5. Identify any staff education and training needs, and include any technical assistance needed to implement strategy and achieve goal.

Staff training is a key action step in Strategy 3 to promote coaching and goal-planning case management practices. We plan to utilize a web-based training series called "Coaching for Success," made available by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Administration for Children & Families. We will also utilize our contract with University of California Davis to provide additional training to staff. In addition, each of our other strategies involves staff training components related to those strategies and may also involve updates to our induction training curriculum. We plan to hold All Staff meetings to include staff from all classifications (Eligibility Workers, Employment Specialists, Social Work Specialists, Clerical etc.) to ensure new or updated program information is disseminated to everyone. We will elicit subject matter experts to participate in training staff during the in-person All Staff meetings.

Strategy 2 on piloting focused outreach strategies for clients who have been unengaged for 3 months or longer will require technical support from data analysts within SFHSA. We have a strong team of analysts that we will be able to turn to, and we may also request guidance from our consultant Public Consultant Group if needed.

6. Describe how the CWD plans to mitigate and/or address both known internal and external barriers to achieve this goal.

One internal barrier to achieving these goals is competing priorities and initiatives. San Francisco is migrating to the CalSAWS system on October 30, 2023, and much of our focus in this calendar year will need to be devoted to this transition. We can mitigate this in part by identifying how the new system can best support our engagement strategies and strive to create synergies between the two efforts. We will attempt to take advantage of the opportunity the CalSAWS transition presents to streamline processes and update guidance in ways that improve staff ease of use.

Resistance to change may be a challenge, particularly with Strategy 5 on updating the performance management system. However, this will be part of a broader effort SFHSA is making toward a new performance management approach centered around core competencies and SMART goals. This challenge can be mitigated in part by clearly articulating the reason for and the advantages of the change, providing support and guidance to address questions and concerns, and leveraging SFHSA's training on the core competencies and new performance management system.

7. Describe how your facility will continuously evaluate each action step taken to see if improvement is being achieved. (e.g., tracking tools, meetings, monitoring, etc.) Include who will be responsible for follow up and compliance.

For Strategy 1, we will monitor the number of clients enrolled in educational programs overall and by program on a monthly basis. We will also monitor additional outcomes, such as training completion, and job placement after the training. We will examine this data both overall and by sub-population (e.g., by race/ethnicity, gender identity, language, age groups) to understand trends and disparities among different populations. The Cal-OAR analyst and other data analysts at SFHSA will be responsible for creating reports related to this strategy and communicating trends to the CalWORKs management team. The CalWORKs management team will then be responsible for making adjustments to the strategies, if needed.

Strategy 2 is intended to experiment with outreach strategies targeted to groups of clients who have been unengaged for 3 months or more. This will likely involve developing outreach strategies customized for different demographic populations and could also involve collaboration with SFHSA's Communications Team. If we identify strategies that are effective, we will roll them out to client populations more broadly and incorporate them into our client communication and case management practices. This will involve numerous tasks in close coordination with a data analyst team. The CalWORKs Director will oversee this effort and review progress.

Strategies 3, 4, and 5 primarily involve completion of specific tasks. Various staff will be delegated to work on different tasks, and progress on completion of these tasks will be monitored by the CalWORKs Director and management team. Whenever possible, we will obtain feedback from clients and staff on deliverables. For example, on Strategy 3 to improve our communications materials, when we launch new materials, we can ask clients to share their feedback, as well as ask staff to share input they heard from clients they served. We can then make revisions based on their feedback. On Strategies 3 and 4, we will provide avenues for staff to share feedback on trainings they received, as well as on updated guidance.

One of the action steps in Strategy 5 will generate data that can be analyzed to provide some insights into the quality of case management – specifically, implementation of a new quality review process using a structured template geared toward assessing client engagement and use of coaching and goal-setting practices. We plan to analyze data from the reviews disaggregated by client sub-populations to identify disparities. A team of quality assurance (QA) analysts will be responsible for working with CalWORKs managers and supervisors to develop the review template. Once it’s been finalized, a data analyst team will be responsible for selecting a random sample of cases for each QA reviewer and supervisor to review each month. The QA team and supervisors will then be responsible for conducting the reviews. Data analysts will then be responsible for creating reports on the reviews and sharing insights with supervisors and the CalWORKs management team. Supervisors will use the reports to coach individual staff, and the CalWORKs management team will use them to identify areas where further training, guidance, or support is needed.

We will also monitor trends in the Engagement Rate on the Cal-OAR Data Dashboard. We will examine this data by sub-population to detect disparities.

Goal 2: Decrease Rate of Program Reentries to 20% from 22%. Review using Cal-OAR Dashboard improving by 0.7% every 12 months within 3 years (for a total of a 2.0% improvement)

Strategy 1*: Create incentives for clients who discontinue from CalWORKs financial assistance due to employment*

Strategy 2*: Expand and improve case management during post-CalWORKs job retention services*

Strategy 3*: Improve quality of post-CalWORKs resource information*

Strategy 4*: Monitor data on the rate of reentries and employment incentives to determine if there are demographic disparities between families who reenter the program or received employment incentives compared to those who did not; take action if disparities exist*

1. Explain the reasoning or methodology which was used to determine this goal.

We selected Rate of Program Reentries because, in developing our County Self-Assessment, we heard concerns about the “benefits cliff” dissuading clients from career advancement opportunities, and we felt that this was an important issue to address. These concerns were also shared by our peer review county, Santa Clara, and came up extensively in our discussion. In addition, San Francisco’s reentry rates are higher than statewide, though we do not have a good understanding of the reasons why.

2. What led the CWD to these improvement strategies?

Providing clients with a sizable financial incentive when they discontinue from CalWORKs due to employment may be one way to counter concerns about the benefits cliff. At the moment, we are specifically considering a structure that will allocate a greater incentive the longer an individual remains in their job (for example, providing families with up to $1500, with $250 issued when they exit CalWORKs assistance, an additional $250 3 months later, and $1000 6 months after the CalWORKs discontinuance). In addition, while we currently provide supportive services in the year after a family discontinues from CalWORKs from employment, our case management support has typically been light, and we have not informed clients of the variety of resources available at this important milestone (for example, Earned Income Tax Credits from the federal, state, and local governments). Strategies 2 and 3 seek to improve the post-CalWORKs support we provide to families in the 12 months after discontinuance. Through enhanced case management, we hope to help clients through challenges that may prevent them from sustaining employment and encourage them to continue seeking career advancement opportunities if they would like to do so. In addition, we plan to identify supports and resources that will be helpful to clients when they transition off of CalWORKs assistance into employment, build these into our post-aid support, and to update our communication materials to help increase awareness of these resources.

3. Discuss any research or literature that supports the strategies chosen. Cite reference(s), if applicable.

Evaluations have indicated that incentives can promote increases in employment and employment retention and addressing the “benefits cliff” has been promoted as an important component of efforts to improve the use of TANF funds.

* Hamilton, G. (2012). Improving Employment and Earnings for TANF Recipients. TANF Research Synthesis Brief Series. Retrieved from: https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/25391/412566-Improving-Employment-and-Earnings-for-TANF-Recipients.PDF

* Rodrigue, S., Lyons, M., & Nelson, M. (2022, August 22). Seven Ways to Improve TANF and Help Families Advance. American Public Human Services Association. Retrieved June 8, 2023, from https://aphsa.org/aphsablog/TANF-modernization-22/seven-ways-to-improve-TANF-and-help-families.aspx

Expanding and improving case management services for participants, as well as integrating other community services to help clients transitioning off TANF, has been suggested as best practices. See, for example, Maag, T., & Clagett, M. (2020, December 1). How to Transform TANF to Better Serve America's Workers and Families. JFF. Retrieved June 8, 2023, from https://jfforg-new-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/Brief-How_to_Transform_TANF_to_Better_Serve_America_Final.pdf

4. Describe the roles of each partner and collaborator in implementing the selected strategies.

For Strategy 2 on expanding and improving case management during the post-CalWORKs retention period, SFHSA’s Workforce Development Division will be involved in this effort by providing job coaching and counseling for clients (for example, providing advice on how to build good working relationships with supervisors or address a conflict with a co-worker), as well as support clients’ job search if they want to advance their career. We will be making clients aware of these services through improved communications materials, as well as through case managers. Individual clients will be referred to Workforce Development staff if they are encountering challenges in their jobs or if they want to search for a better job. Workforce Development staff will work individually with each client, based on their needs, interests, and available schedules. We have also discussed seamless transitions to SFHSA's CalFresh Employment & Training program if CalWORKs can no longer support a client's need, but the family is receiving CalFresh. In addition, we will be working with external partners who provide services and resources useful to families when they transition from CalWORKs assistance. For example, we anticipate referring clients to an individualized financial counseling program called Smart Money Coaching, operated by a non-profit organization called Balance and funded in part by San Francisco’s Office of Financial Empowerment. We also plan on increasing awareness of federal state, and local

Earned Income Tax Credits, and will refer clients to partners who provide free tax preparation during tax season. We will utilize our Launchpad system to make referrals to our partners and monitor clients' usage of these resources.

5. Identify any staff education and training needs, and include any technical assistance needed to implement strategy and achieve goal.

Staff will need to be trained on the new incentive structure, the services and resources available to clients during the post-aid period, as well as updated language to use to communicate this information to clients. We plan to develop written guidance with this information and will provide training at All Staff meetings.

6. Describe how the CWD plans to mitigate and/or address both known internal and external barriers to achieve this goal.

It is vital that incentive payments are paid in a timely fashion and policies are applied consistently. Internal barriers such as a failure in the payment process and incorrect application of policy could lessen the incentive to work that this strategy is trying to strengthen. Clients must be confident that they will receive the incentive if they are eligible. Well documented and effectively trained policies and procedures will be the key to mitigating these internal issues, as will responsiveness to clients when questions or concerns are raised about the incentive payments.

Since there are many factors that affect reentry to CalWORKs, we do not expect that the changes we plan to implement will by themselves reduce San Francisco's Rate of Reentry. External factors, such as the state of the local economy, will play large roles in clients' ability to obtain and retain employment.

7. Describe how your facility will continuously evaluate each action step taken to see if improvement is being achieved. (e.g., tracking tools, meetings, monitoring, etc.) Include who will be responsible for follow up and compliance

Once we begin to issue incentives, we will develop reports to track the number of clients receiving them, including the demographic composition of those who received the incentives. Over time, we can also strive to create reports on reentry among clients who received the payments. As part of Strategy 4, we will examine data both overall and by sub-population to identify trends and disparities (for example, by gender identity, race/ethnicity, age groups, language). We will also compare demographic composition of families who received the incentives and who reentered CalWORKs with those who did not to determine if demographic disparities exist. Our data analyst teams will be responsible for producing the reports and sharing insights with the CalWORKs management team.

Several of the action steps pertaining to Goal 2 are tasks to be completed. Various staff will be delegated to work on different tasks, and progress on completion of these tasks will be monitored by the CalWORKs Director and the CalWORKs management team. Whenever possible, we will obtain feedback from clients and staff on deliverables. For example, on Strategy 3 to improve our communications materials, when we launch new materials, we can ask clients to share their feedback, as well as ask staff to share input they heard from clients they served. We can then make revisions based on their feedback. If we find that demographic disparities exist between those who received the incentives and those who did not, we may conduct focus groups to try to understand the reasons for disparities and brainstorm ways to address them.

We will also monitor trends in the Rate of Reentry on the Cal-OAR Data Dashboard. We will examine this data by sub-population to detect disparities.

Section 2: Peer Review

Peer county/ counties selected for collaboration and consultation:

Santa Clara

1. Discuss how the Peer Review process impact Cal-SIP development.

The peer review process positively added to the formation of our Cal-SIP. We were able to learn much from Santa Clara and we hope they were able to learn from us as well. In relation to performance measures on engagement and re-entry to CalWORKs, we both shared concerns with limited support for clients when they are discontinued from CalWORKs financial assistance due to employment. We shared ideas on improving counseling, support, and financial education for clients during post-aid support to help families through this transition. Additionally, we discussed different monetary rewards, for example, in orientation and OCAT completion, educational accomplishments, employment, and job retention. We also discussed different methods for information sharing about services and resources in the community, from barrier removal to employment and education opportunities. In addition, we discussed quality control practices, such as supervisory reviews using structured tools. We also discussed online learning platforms and integrating CalWORKs 2.0 into training and materials. Much of our discussion informed the strategies and action steps we outline in our Cal-SIP.

2. Discuss steps taken to conduct peer review.

Santa Clara and San Francisco decided to work together as we have some similar characteristics, such as urban populations, large immigrant communities, high housing costs, and similar industries and labor markets. We first interacted with Santa Clara representatives in Cal-SIP trainings facilitated by CDSS and Mathematica during breakout sessions. After the last training, we met virtually to plan logistics for the peer review. We ultimately held two virtual meetings (3/27 and 3/30), in which each county presented a summary of issues and problem areas identified in the County Self-Assessment, as well as strategies under consideration. The other county asked questions, provided feedback, and offered suggestions and ideas. From this format, our two counties had wide ranging discussions about areas to prioritize, ideas for improvement, and potential challenges.

3. Briefly summarize observations and action items from Peer Review process.

During the Peer Review process, Santa Clara shared with us several materials that may help us develop and implement some of our improvement ideas, particularly on improving communication materials for clients and tools for staff. These include a comprehensive resource guide that is publicly available for clients, staff, and partners; a publicly available website listing employment opportunities for jobseekers; and a matrix of educational resources in the county utilized by staff. We have also incorporated into our Cal-SIP Santa Clara's experience in utilizing supervisory reviews with a structured guide geared toward assessing staff’s utilization of CalWORKs 2.0 practices in their case management. Furthermore, our discussion about incentives and post-aid support for families helped to inform several of our improvement ideas.

Section 3: Target Measure Summary

Goal 1: Increase Engagement Rate to 24% from 21%. Review using Cal-OAR Dashboard improving by 1.0% every 12 months within 3 years (for a total of a 3.0% improvement).

Performance Measure: Engagement Rate

Baseline Result: 21%

Cal-SIP Start Time: 12/1/2023	Progress Report #1: 12/6/2024	Progress Report #2: 1/9/2026	Cycle End Date: 6/30/2026

Strategies, Action Steps, and Tracking Improvement:

Strategy 1: Improve client connection to training and educational opportunities

Action Step 1: Develop a career and education exploration activity in which staff member with expertise meets individually with clients to explore career goals and education programs, and plan next steps

Action Step 2: Develop easy-to-use resource guide for staff on educational programs in San Francisco; train staff on how to use it

Action Step 3: Promote online learning platforms to clients (ULearn and Cell-Ed if available)

Action Step 4: Review monthly or quarterly data on client engagement in educational activities, overall and disaggregated by sub-population to examine trends

Action Step 5: Consider developing incentives for clients when they complete educational milestones

Tracking: For Strategy 1, we will monitor the number of clients enrolled in educational programs overall and by program on a monthly basis. We will also monitor additional outcomes, such as training completion, and job placement after the training. We will examine this data both overall and by sub-population (e.g., by race/ethnicity, gender identity, language, age groups) to understand trends and disparities among different populations. The Cal-OAR analyst and other data analysts at SFHSA will be responsible for creating reports related to this strategy and communicating trends to the CalWORKs management team. The CalWORKs management team will then be responsible for making adjustments to the strategies, if needed.

Strategy 2: Conduct focused outreach on client populations with low engagement rates

Action Step 1: From Welfare-to-Work case data, obtain a list of clients who have been unengaged for 3 or more months and examine demographic trends and patterns.

Action Step 2: Hold brainstorming sessions to identify outreach strategies for various demographic groupings of clients who have been unengaged for 3 months or more.

Action Step 3: Pilot test outreach strategies from the brainstorming sessions. To the extent possible, roll out strategies utilizing random assignment in control and treatment groups to assess effectiveness of the strategies

Action Step 4: Identify strategies that led to improved engagement

Action Step 5: Implement strategies with positive results more broadly

Tracking: Strategy 2 is intended to experiment with outreach strategies targeted to groups of clients who have been unengaged for 3 months or more. This will likely involve developing outreach strategies customized for different demographic populations and could also involve collaboration with SFHSA's Communications Team. If we identify strategies that are effective, we will roll them out to client populations more broadly and incorporate them into our client communication and case management practices. This will involve numerous tasks in close coordination with a data analyst team. The CalWORKs Director will oversee this effort and review progress.

Strategy 3: Promote coaching and goal-planning case management approaches

Action Step 1: Provide & schedule training for staff and supervisors on coaching and goal-planning, including working in trauma-informed ways, working with clients from diverse backgrounds, etc.

Action Step 2: Designate time for peer discussion on putting coaching skills and tools into everyday practice

Action Step 3: Update induction training modules to incorporate coaching & goal-planning

Action Step 4: Revamp county FSP/WtW plan to be a goal-setting tool

Action Step 5: Develop tools for staff to navigate resources, policies, and processes more easily

Strategy 4: Make communication materials more informative and motivational

Action Step 1: Identify “Right Words” to use to replace technical or negative-sounding terms

Action Step 2: Create simplified explainers of steps in the CalWORKs & Welfare-to-Work process, using “Right Words”

Action Step 3: Update Orientation materials & presentations to be more motivational

Action Step 4: Review other communications materials for staff, clients, and community-based providers on services available and update/improve where needed

Action Step 5: Train staff on using “Right Words” when communicating with families

Strategy 5: Update performance management system to improve consistency in working with clients

Action Step 1: Implement new performance management system centered around core competencies and SMART goals, including establishing a SMART goal for Welfare-to-Work case workers focused on client engagement

Action Step 2: Train supervisors on core competencies, using SMART goals in supervision, and performance measures related to client engagement

Action Step 3: Update case review template used by Welfare-to-Work supervisors and quality assurance reviewers to focus on client engagement and reflect coaching and goal-setting approaches

Action Step 4: Implement a supervisory review process, in which supervisors review a random sample of cases for each staff member each month, using the updated case review template

Action Step 5: Review case review data disaggregated by client sub-populations to identify potential disparities in case management quality

Tracking**:** Strategies 3, 4, and 5 primarily involve completion of specific tasks. Various staff will be delegated to work on different tasks, and progress on completion of these tasks will be monitored by the CalWORKs Director and management team. Whenever possible, we will obtain feedback from clients and staff on deliverables. For example, on Strategy 3 to improve our communications materials, when we launch new materials, we can ask clients to share their feedback, as well as ask staff to share input they heard from clients they served. We can then make revisions based on their feedback. On Strategies 3 and 4, we will provide avenues for staff to share feedback on trainings they received, as well as on updated guidance.

One of the action steps in Strategy 5 will generate data that can be analyzed to provide some insights into the quality of case management – specifically, implementation of a new quality review process using a structured template geared toward assessing client engagement and use of coaching and goal-setting practices. We plan to analyze data from the reviews disaggregated by client sub-populations to identify disparities. A team of quality assurance (QA) analysts will be responsible for working with CalWORKs managers and supervisors to develop the review template. Once it’s been finalized, a data analyst team will be responsible for selecting a random sample of cases for each

QA reviewer and supervisor to review each month. The QA team and supervisors will then be responsible for conducting the reviews. Data analysts will then be responsible for creating reports on the reviews and sharing insights with supervisors and the CalWORKs management team. Supervisors will use the reports to coach individual staff, and the CalWORKs management team will use them to identify areas where further training, guidance, or support is needed.

We will also monitor trends in the Engagement Rate on the Cal-OAR Data Dashboard. We will examine this data by sub-population to detect disparities.

Goal 2: Decrease Rate of Program Reentries to 20% from 22%. Review using Cal-OAR Dashboard improving by 0.7% every 12 months within 3 years (for a total of a 2.0% improvement)

Performance Measure: Rate of Program Reentries

Baseline Result: 22%

Cal-SIP Start Time: 12/1/2023	**Progress Report #1:** 12/6/2024	**Progress Report #2:** 1/9/2026	**Cycle End Date:** 6/30/2026

Strategies, Action Steps, and Tracking Improvement:

Strategy 1: Create incentives for clients who discontinue from CalWORKs financial assistance due to employment

Action 1: Establish an incentive structure for clients who discontinue from CalWORKs monthly aid due to employment

Action 2: Develop guidance for issuing the incentives, train staff on the new incentives and guidance, and begin implementation

Action 3: Review data on issuances and Cal-OAR program reentries data, overall and disaggregated by sub-population to examine trends

Strategy 2: Expand and improve case management during post-CalWORKs job retention services

Action 1: Identify internal and external resources that may be useful to families who have exited CalWORKs aid due to employment

Action 2: Engage internal and external partners providing these resources to partner with SFHSA in improving case management for families receiving job retention services

Action 3: Develop new protocols and processes for case management and referrals to partners during the post-aid period

Action 4: Draft guidance for the new protocols and processes and train staff

Strategy 3: Improve quality of post-CalWORKs resource information

Action 1: Review existing letters and notices provided to families when they discontinue from CalWORKs monthly aid due to employment

Action 2: Revise materials to be more positive and informative

Action 3: Train staff on using the new materials and new language

Strategy 4: Monitor data on rate of reentries and employment incentives to determine if there are demographic disparities between families who reentry the program or receive the employment incentive compared to those who did not; take action if disparities exist

Action 1: Analyze disaggregated data to determine if there are disparities in the demographic composition of families who received the employment incentives and families in Welfare-to-Work who did not

Action 2: Analyze disaggregated data to determine if there are disparities in the demographic composition of families who reenter the program

Action 3: If demographic disparities exist, conduct interviews or focus groups with partners, staff, and clients to try to understand reasons why

Action 4: Hold brainstorming sessions on next steps based on feedback

Action 5: Identify and implement changes based on feedback and brainstorming sessions.

Tracking: Once we begin to issue incentives, we will develop reports to track the number of clients receiving them, including the demographic composition of those who received the incentives. Over time, we can also strive to create reports on reentry among clients who received the payments.

Several of the action steps pertaining to Goal 2 are tasks to be completed. Various staff will be delegated to work on different tasks, and progress on completion of these tasks will be monitored by the CalWORKs Director and the CalWORKs management team. Whenever possible, we will obtain feedback from clients and staff on deliverables.

For example, on Strategy 3 to improve our communications materials, when we launch new materials, we can ask clients to share their feedback, as well as ask staff to share input they heard from clients they served. We can then make revisions based on their feedback. If we find that demographic disparities exist between those who received the incentives and those who did not, we will conduct focus groups to try to understand the reasons and to brainstorm ways to reduce the disparities. We may then identify and implement changes.

We will also monitor trends in the Rate of Reentry on the Cal-OAR Data Dashboard. We will examine this data by sub-population to detect disparities.

As part of Strategy 4, we will examine data both overall and by sub-population to identify trends and disparities (for example, by gender identity, race/ethnicity, age groups, language). We will also compare demographic composition of families who received the incentives with those who did not to determine if demographic disparities exist. Our data analyst teams will be responsible for producing the reports and sharing insights with the CalWORKs management team.

We will also monitor trends in the Rate of Reentry on the Cal-OAR Data Dashboard. We will examine this data by sub-population to detect disparities.

Appendix

Appendix is intended to include additional information not already captured within the Cal-SIP Report.

Appendix A: Cal-OAR Signature Sheet: The Cal-SIP must be approved by the CWDs County Board of Supervisors in public session, or as applicable by the chief elected official.

Appendix B: Cal-OAR Team and Partner & Collaborators. Details the Cal-OAR team and partners engaged in the Cal-SIP process.