

CalWORKs Handbook



Employment Services

Tehama County Department of Social
Services (TCDSS)

TCDSS CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Handbook

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SECTION

1

What is CalWORKs?

The purpose of the California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program is to help you prepare for employment, find a job, and advance your career so that you can support your family and enjoy a better way of life. CalWORKs staff will make sure you have the support you need.

A Personal Employment Plan

The Tehama County Department of Social Services (TCDSS) CalWORKs staff works with you to develop a personal plan based on your goals, strengths, experience and interests. This plan will show you the training, education and job search strategies that you will follow, so that you can find and keep a job and advance your career. CalWORKs values and supports your role as a parent and provides a network of services, including child care, transportation and counseling.

CalWORKs 2.0

There have been significant efforts made over the past several years to identify a new approach to deliver services to CalWORKs families. CalWORKs 2.0 was developed to improve outcomes for families. This approach focuses on helping people set and achieve goals, with an environment of flexibility, support and a shift from directive case management to individual case management. Setting meaningful and realistic goals helps to build confidence, motivation and the ability to build core skills. Several tools have been created to assist families to set and meet goals on a pathway to gain resources for growth and personal success.

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Requirements for Mandatory Participants:

- Keep appointments made by you and your Employment and Training Worker (ETW)
- Sign a plan
- Meet all requirements included in your plan
- Accept an offer of a job, unless you have a good reason not to. If you are working, keep your job and maintain your earnings unless there is good cause
- Provide proof of satisfactory progress in your assigned activity as required

CalWORKs staff will decide if you are a Mandatory Participant when:

- You apply for cash aid
- Your eligibility to cash aid is re-determined
- You report a change in circumstances that may prevent you from participating

"A little progress each day adds up to big results." -Satya Nani



Meet Your Employment and Training Worker (ETW)

Your ETW will work with you as you make very important decisions about your family’s future.

It is important to talk about your needs honestly so that your time in CalWORKs can be spent in the ways that benefit you the most. If you are the victim of domestic abuse, are dependent on drugs or alcohol, or you or your children have special needs, your ETW can help you find the services you need while you participate in planned activities.

Your ETW will be there to help you achieve your goals and overcome your challenges every step of the way.

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Getting Started with CalWORKs

Attend an Orientation

Shortly after you apply for cash aid and are determined to be eligible for CalWORKs, you will be scheduled for a CalWORKs Orientation. At the Orientation you will learn what you can expect from

the CalWORKs program and about your rights, responsibilities and choices.

Your ETW will:

- Help you identify and apply for jobs available in private industry, non-profit organizations or public agencies
- Refer you to services to help update your resume, practice your interview skills, improve your presentation, and build the skills you need to get a job in today’s workforce
- Help you find and enroll in training or educational programs that can make you more employable
- Help you identify resources you may be eligible to receive, including supportive services such as child care, transportation, assistance with work or training related expenses

SECTION

4

The Road to Success

Belongs to You

Your Plan is very important. It describes in detail how you and your ETW will work together to prepare you for the workforce and find a job. Your Plan describes your goals, work activities, the number of hours you will spend in each activity, and the supportive services you will need to carry out the Plan. The CalWORKs team is here to assist you.

The First Step is to Create Your Personal Plan:

After your CalWORKs Orientation you will attend an Appraisal appointment with your ETW to begin

reviewing your education, work history, and identify any challenges you may be experiencing. You will begin developing a plan for services to overcome those challenges, allowing you to reach your goal. Services may include, referrals to mental health, substance use recovery, and/or domestic abuse support. At the first meeting you and your ETW will determine if an immediate referral for job readiness would be beneficial for you to meet your goals.

If You Are Already in a Training or Education Program

Your existing training or education program may qualify to become part of your Plan, as a “Self-Initiated Program” (SIP), if all of the following apply to you:

- The program leads to an undergraduate degree, certificate, or California regular teaching credential
- The program is on the Tehama County CalWORKs list of programs leading to employment. If your program is not on the list, you must be able to show how your education or training program will lead to self-supporting employment
- You are making satisfactory progress in the program

Your ETW will review your existing training or education program to see if it qualifies as part of your plan.

Job Readiness / Job Search

After the initial meeting with your ETW, you may be assigned to a Job Readiness workshop. During this workshop you will learn about the local labor market and become familiar with the process of applying for jobs.

Assessment

Upon completion of the Job Readiness activity a Career Assessment is typically conducted. You and your ETW will select activities that will best fit your work or educational plan.

Overcoming Challenges

It may be difficult for you to take advantage of all that CalWORKs offers because you may have a disability, are in an abusive environment, or because you or a family member is dependent on drugs or alcohol. There is help! Your ETW can refer you for personal counseling and treatment services provided by community organizations, at no cost to you. Such treatment may be part of your Plan.

Finalizing your Plan

You and your ETW will discuss each of the following parts of your Plan:

Rights and Responsibilities

Tells you about our responsibilities, and your rights and responsibilities.

Handbook

A reference guide to your CalWORKs experience.

Your Personalized Plan

Outlines the activities you will participate in to reach your goal.

You and your ETW will sign a new plan each time you begin a new activity.

Plan Activities

- Work related activities
- Counseling
- Education or skill-related activities

Your ETW will explain your participation requirements. Participation of 20, 30 or 35 hours per week, depending on your household composition.

Exemptions from Work Activities

You may be exempt from participating in activities if you have a significant barrier to employment. During the exemption period, cash aid time-limits may be suspended. We may ask for proof when you claim any of the following exemptions:

- Under 16 years old and not a custodial parent
- 60 years or older
- Age 16, 17 or 18 years old and go to high school or adult school full time, unless you are in school as one of your activities or you are a primary parent.
- Affected by a disability expected to last at least 30 days (doctor's verification is required) that would keep you from working or participating
- Pregnant and a doctor states that you cannot work or participate
- A non-parent relative who is caring for a child who is a dependent or ward of the court, or a child at risk of placement in foster care. The County will determine your eligibility if taking care of the child keeps you from working or participating in an activity on a regular basis
- Caring for an ill or incapacitated member of your household. The County will determine your eligibility if taking care of the person keeps you from working or participating in an activity on a regular basis
- The parent or other relative caretaker of a child 0 - 12 months of age. The exemption will last until the child turns one

- The parent or caretaker who has primary care of a child, birth to 23 months, can receive a once in a lifetime exemption. This exemption can also be saved and used with a subsequent child.



Cal Learn Parents

Cal Learn is a program for pregnant or parenting teens, under the age of 20, who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent. Participants may receive a cash bonus for meeting program requirements. Participants receive the benefits and supportive services of CalWORKs, including child care and transportation for school and work.

"Opportunities don't happen, you create them." -Chris Grosser

Work-related Activities

Job readiness, Job search

Your Plan may include activities in which you learn employer expectations, resume writing, interviewing and job seeking skills.

Unsubsidized Employment

Work for an employer who pays all of your wages. CalWORK's goal is that you will find such a job.

Subsidized Employment

Work for an employer, when some or all of the wage is paid by CalWORKs or another program. Subsidized employment may be in the public or private sector.

Self-Employment

Running your own business enterprise may be an approved activity. Talk to your ETW for more information.

Work Experience

Work Experience gives you unpaid, real world experience at a private, public or non-profit organization. Work experience offers you the opportunity to polish your job skills and build your resume. It will provide you with current work experience that can lead to paid employment.

Vocational Education and Training

Work-related activities may include Vocational Education or training that will teach you skills to qualify you for a specific job. Vocational education and training may take place at a college or trade school.

Work-Study

Work-Study is a subsidized job program that provides additional work experience and financial aid to college students. You will receive a separate paycheck from the school or employer.

Other Activities

Adult Basic Education, Including English-as-a-Second Language, High School Diploma, or GED

Adult education, English as a second language, high school diploma and GED courses may be counted as activities.

Mental Health, Substance Use Recovery and Domestic Abuse Services

These services are available to you at any time and are conveniently located in our office.

Education Leading to Employment

Your Plan may include academic education directly related to employment. Discuss your academic goals with your ETW.

Job Skills Leading to Employment

Job skills leading to employment are training activities that will improve your job skills and will support your career goals.



SECTION

5

CalWORKs Participation Requirements

Single Parent Families

If you are the adult in a single-parent CalWORKs case, with a child under six (6) years old, you must participate in work activities for at least 20 hours per week. If you do not have a child under age six (6), you must participate for at least 30 hours per week.

Two-Parent Families

If you are an adult in a two-parent CalWORKs family, you and/or the other parent must participate in activities for a combined 35 hours per week.

Cal Learn Parents

Cal Learn participants are required to maintain satisfactory progress to obtain a high school diploma.

Students (college or trade school, etc.)

Students may combine school activities, including approved study time, with work-related activities (including work study) and other activities to meet participation requirements.

Self-Initiated Program (SIP)

Students who are already attending school and identified as a SIP must meet a 20 or 30 hours-per-week participation requirement.

Participation is the Key to Your Success

Participation requirements for each activity will be described in your Plan. Your ETW may request proof of your attendance and progress.

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Supportive Services

You may need more than training to overcome barriers to self-sufficiency. Your ETW will help you arrange and/or pay for child care, transportation, counseling, and work or training related expenses.



Child Care

When your children are safe and happy in a good child care setting, you will be able to concentrate on the work you must do to prepare for, enter and keep a job.

You may be eligible to 12 months of continuous child care for each child in your home under age 13 or up to 18 years of age if the child has special needs.

Your child care expenses may be paid while you are on aid and up to two years after you leave aid.

Child care may be provided by a licensed in-home provider or at a licensed child care center. A list of licensed child care providers can be obtained from

Child Care Referral and Education (CCRE) by calling 529-3131.

You may also use a license-exempt provider (a family member or a friend). Family members other than the child's aunt, uncle, or grandparents, must pass a background check to be eligible for child care reimbursement.

We cannot pay for child care provided by someone who is already supported by your CalWORKs grant, by the child's legal guardian, the parent, or by somebody under 18 years old.

Transportation

CalWORKs may pay transportation costs for travel to and from your plan activities, and travel to and from child care providers.

You may qualify for a bus ticket or monthly bus pass. If you drive, you may have mileage reimbursed (with a valid CA driver's license and insurance). If you do not have auto insurance, you may be able to get help with start-up fees. If you need repairs to a car that you own in order to get to work, you may qualify for repair assistance. For rural residents without transportation, you may qualify for pick-up and drop-off for certain activities. Please discuss your transportation needs with your ETW.

Work or Training Related Costs

CalWORKs can pay for work or training related costs, such as: books, tools, special clothing, and other items you may need as part of your activities.

Mental Health, Substance Use Recovery, and Domestic Abuse Services

During the appraisal or at any time during your participation in the program, you can request an appointment with one of our behavioral health professionals, located conveniently in our office. If you feel this would benefit your chances of success, contact your ETW.

Vouchers and Advance Payments

If you qualify for supportive service payments and you need a payment before you begin your activity, your ETW may be able to assist you.

- Unsubsidized or subsidized work
- Work experience
- Job skills training directly related to employment
- Mental health, substance use recovery and/or domestic abuse services.

SECTION 7 Job Retention

You may continue to be eligible for supportive services under a CalWORKs Job Retention Plan after discontinuance from cash aid due to employment income. Job retention services include:

- Transportation to work (for up to 90 days)
- Child care for work (for up to two years)
- Counseling services (for up to one year)
- Work and training expenses (30-days)

SECTION 8 Reappraisal

If you have not found employment after completing all activities in your Plan, you and your ETW will complete a reappraisal. A reappraisal will help determine if there were special circumstances that prevented you from finding employment and what type of activities to include in your new Plan. If special circumstances did not prevent you from finding employment, you must participate in one of the following activities:

SECTION 9 What if You Can't Participate?

There may be compelling reasons that prevent you from participating in work or other activities. Discuss these with your ETW who will determine if they are considered 'good cause' for not participating. Your ETW will work with you to overcome barriers to participation.

Personal Reasons for Not Participating

If you are unable to participate in activities due to certain circumstances discuss them with your ETW. They may be able to assist you with the services you need.

Work Related Reasons to Refuse an Activity

You may refuse a job or an activity due to:

- Discrimination at the job or training because of age, sex, race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, physical or mental disability, political affiliation or marital status
- Travel to work or training is more than two hours from your home round trip by car, bus or other

transportation, or more than two miles, round trip, if you have to walk because other transportation is not available. The limit on travel and mileage does not include transportation time or mileage to take family members to and from school or to and from other care providers

- Conditions at the job or training violate health and safety standards or could cause you serious injury or death
- The job or work activity does not provide Worker’s Compensation Insurance
- Accepting a job or work activity would interrupt or interfere with an approved education or training assignment (this does not apply to Work Experience)
- Accepting a job or work activity would cause you to violate the terms of your union membership

If any of these reasons apply, you will discuss with your ETW. You will continue your activity or be assigned to another appropriate activity.

days after the date of the notice to meet with or call your ETW to explain and give a good reason for refusing or failing to comply with the program requirements. The county will decide if it is a good reason.

If you have a good reason for not doing what is required, your ETW will work with you to meet your requirements. If you have a good reason and changes can’t be made so that you are able to meet the requirements you may be exempt from participation in the program.

2. Compliance Plan

If you are not meeting your requirements you will be required to sign a Compliance Plan, which is an agreement to satisfactorily perform the failed activity for up to 60-days from the date the activity begins or for the length of the activity, whichever is shorter. If you fulfill the terms of the Compliance Plan, no penalties will be applied to you.

If you do not fulfill the terms of the Compliance Plan, your ETW will review with you whether you had good cause. You may also grieve or appeal the Compliance Plan if you disagree with it. If you do not have good cause you will be sanctioned.

3. Financial Sanctions

Sanctions are the reduction of cash aid. When you are sanctioned, your family’s aid will be lowered until you meet the program requirements.

In order to meet the program requirements, you must agree to sign a “Plan to Meet Welfare to Work Rules and Get My Cash Aid Back.” You must satisfactorily perform the agreed upon activity until it is completed or up to a maximum of 30-calendar days after signing the Plan, whichever is shorter.

In two-parent homes, if a parent who must participate in the program causes a financial sanction, that parent will lose their cash aid. At that time, the 2nd parent will be invited to sign a Plan to fulfill the family’s 35-hour participation requirement unless the 2nd parent is medically exempt or has good cause for not participating.

SECTION 10

What Happens if You Don’t Participate? Non-Compliance

As you know, participation is mandatory for all CalWORKs recipients who are not exempt. If for any reason you do not meet program requirements the following steps will be taken:

1. Cause Determination

If you have not met program requirements you will be sent a Notice of Action. You will have 20 calendar

SECTION 11

If You Disagree with a CalWORKs Decision

After you have spoken to your ETW and the ETW Supervisor and you still do not agree with the county's decision, there are three actions you can take.

1. State Hearing

If you disagree with any county action (or failure to act) that affects your grant or your Plan, you can ask for a state hearing. Your ETW will help you or you can fill out the back of any of the county Notice of Action forms. You can request a re-hearing after a state decision is reached, if you still disagree.

- If you file for a state hearing before the penalties start, penalties will not be applied while the hearing is being decided.

2. Independent Assessment

If you do not agree with your Plan, someone who is not a county representative can conduct another assessment. A new Plan will be developed with you based on that new Assessment. This Plan will be binding, although you have the right to ask for a state hearing to appeal the decision.

- If you have an independent Assessment done, penalties will not be applied while you await the results of the review.

3. Formal Grievance

Your ETW will tell you how to file a grievance.

- If you use the county's formal grievance process, you must continue to meet all plan requirements, except the requirement which is the subject of the grievance, to prevent penalties from being applied while the grievance is being decided.

You may file a grievance at any time. You may ask for a state hearing if you are not satisfied with the outcome of the grievance process. However, you do not have to file a grievance to ask for a state hearing.



*"If Everyone is moving forward
together, then success takes care of
itself." - Henry Ford*

Notes:



Tehama County
SOCIAL SERVICES
ASSIST • EMPOWER • PROTECT

***PARTNERING WITH OUR COMMUNITY TO
ASSIST, EMPOWER, AND PROTECT.***

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