

CalWORKs Program Review

Introduction

The CalWORKs (California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids) Program is part of California's implementation of the federally mandated Welfare-to-Work program or TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families), which assists parents and families experiencing financial and personal hardship.

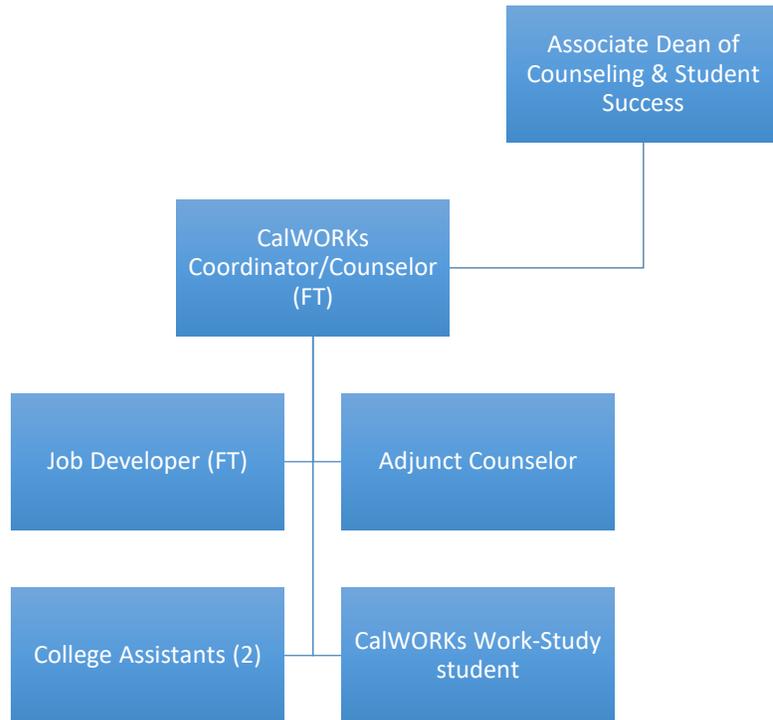
Participants initiate their eligibility for CalWORKs/TANF cash through the Los Angeles County Department of Social Services (DPSS). Persons receiving cash aid are mandated, except under certain exemptions, to develop a Welfare-to-Work Plan that is designed to put them on a path toward self-sufficiency. The GAIN (Greater Avenues to Independence) Program is a division of DPSS that monitors a participant's Welfare-to-Work Plan activities and provides supportive services and resources to assist the participants in achieving their set goals. As part of the plan, participants must meet certain weekly work-activity requirements, including activities such as job search/job club, volunteer/community service, subsidized and unsubsidized employment, work-study, job training and/or education.

The CalWORKs program at Pasadena City College (PCC) is funded by the Chancellor's Office allocation and a grant from Los Angeles County DPSS. During the 2012-2013 academic year, the program had 333 student participants. To be eligible for the program, a **student must be a parent receiving the adult portion of CalWORKs cash aid and be enrolled in our school**. All students must verify their eligibility for program services each semester/session they are enrolled and participating in the program by submitting a current Verification of Benefits (VOB) or Notice of Action (NOA) from DPSS. One of the primary functions of the CalWORKs program is to coordinate with the County and monitor student participants' compliance with State and County requirements, including completing/verifying information on numerous state/county required forms. In addition, the program provides counseling, case management, work-study opportunities, workshops/training, and other direct resources for students (supplies, books, emergency/transportation assistance, etc.)

For state and county reporting purposes, students are eligible based on the following categories:

- **Self-Initiated Participants (SIPs)** – Participants that were already enrolled in college and pursuing an educational goal prior to being contacted by the County to develop a welfare-to-work plan.
- **Vocational (VOC) Referrals** – Participants that completed a county required assessment process and were approved to include education as part of their welfare-to-work plan. Through this assessment process, educational or training goals were identified and the participant was referred to PCC to pursue those goals.
- **Self-Referred** – typically students who recently began receiving cash aid benefits but have not yet been engaged by DPSS to develop a welfare-to-work plan.
- **Exempt** – Not required to participate in welfare-to-work activities at the moment.
- **Post-Employment** – These students have obtained gainful employment but are still completing educational goals or require additional training.

Organizational Chart



Mission Statement

The mission of the CalWORKs Program is to support the college mission by assisting cash aid recipients in achieving meaningful employment and long-term self-sufficiency. This is achieved through collaboration with campus, community, county and state partners, advocacy, quality educational training, counseling, work-study and personal and job skills development.

Program Outcomes

1. A student will be able to feel personally acknowledged, valued, connected and more aware of his or her potential to achieve personal goals.
2. As a result of interaction with the CalWORKs staff and development of an educational plan, students will be able to identify, select and utilize the services that are of value to them.
3. CalWORKs students will develop a Student Educational Plan with a counselor and understand the requirements to complete their educational goal consistent with their Welfare-To-Work plan.
4. CalWORKs complies with state, county and federal regulations to ensure student access to services and resources.

Category I. Function

Component A: Services Provided

The CalWORKs program provides the following services to students:

- Counseling
- Educational Plans
- Work-study

- County (GAIN) paperwork/requirement assistance and support
- Employment skills preparation
- Personal development workshops
- Progress monitoring
- Advocacy with the County and within the community
- Resource referrals
- Direct support (books, gas cards, supplies, child care, etc.)

The program also works extensively with Los Angeles County Department of Social Services Contracts Management division, GAIN Program administrators, GAIN Services Workers/regions, and eligibility workers to support the student participants and proper enforce the laws. We also meet on a monthly basis with the Los Angeles County CalWORKs Community College Consortium (LAC-5), which includes 21 colleges and LA county administrators of GAIN, Contracts and Childcare.

Category II. Institutional Support

Component A: Budget

The CalWORKs program at Pasadena City College (PCC) is entirely funded by the Chancellor's Office allocation, Federal TANF funds and a grant from Los Angeles County DPSS.

The program currently employs one full-time coordinator and job developer. At this time, a college assistant is used to serve much of the case management function, but there is a need for a full-time and/or consistent person(s) to conduct case management, office management and administrative support.

Case management is the largest function of the program and needs dedicated staff. Many CalWORKs programs have full-time case managers or specialists. The responsibility of these roles include: maintain updated knowledge on county policies and procedures, tracking participants eligibility/documents each term, entering and maintaining caseload and participant data in Banner and on excel for each term, communicating with GAIN workers regarding case specific situations, following up on correspondence regarding program students, verifying enrollment, tracking progress, verifying textbook and supply requests coincide with educational plans/goals, completion of county Monthly Attendance Reports, childcare verification forms, faxing and sending documents to the county or other appropriate agencies, referring students to community resources and more.

Additionally, we need an adjunct counselor(s) to work up to 20 hours/week.

Component B: Space Allocation

The CalWORKs space does not meet the needs of the program, when considering the staff necessary to service the program effectively. A case manager/specialist needs a designated space for confidential conversations. Currently, we use a temporarily vacant office in EOPS for orientation/case management appointments. For our adjunct counseling function, we alternate office space with the EOPS program. In recent years, we have had the funds to further service students and it would be ideal to have space for a small computer lab/stations and tutoring. Recently, we were informed that some monies may be available from LA county for the purchase of computers for student use, however, we have no space to accommodate this.

Category III. Accountability

Component A: Internal Accountability

Outcome:

A student will be able to feel personally acknowledged, valued, connected and more aware of his or her potential to achieve personal goals.

Measure:

- Administration of a paper survey
- Video interviews with program students

Description of Measure:

Survey: A participant survey was developed by Los Angeles County DPSS Contracts Management division as a part of their site monitoring/audit visit and in order to evaluate how students felt about their experience in the CalWORKs program. The survey included “yes” or “no” response options, a satisfaction scale and an open-ended response. The survey was distributed by CalWORKs staff to students who received services. During this academic year, the CalWORKs coordinator position was vacant. When the interim coordinator came in the spring, we used this tool since it was already developed by the county. Data from these surveys were used to assess the SLO #1. It is important to note, that we are aware that this type of survey is not ideal. Yes/No responses do not provide much option for the student to communicate their experiences to us. This will be addressed properly in future surveys used by the program.

Interviews: Interviews with four CalWORKs students were conducted and video recorded. Students reflected on their experience with CalWORKs program and/or EOPS staff and counselors.

Acceptable Target and Rationale

It was our hope that at least 75% of students responding would indicate that they had a positive experience as it related to making them feel personally acknowledged, valued, connected and ware of their potential.

Ideal Target and Rationale:

The ideal target would be 85%. Our students are experiencing numerous personal and academic challenges and we feel it is necessary for the vast majority to feel personally validated in order to increase their belief that they belong at PCC and their commitment to their personal and educational goals.

What steps were taken to analyze the data?

Denise De Robles, CalWORKs Job Developer, summarized and typed the survey participant responses. Qualitative comments were typed exactly as written. Hillina Jarso CalWORKs Interim coordinator, analyzed the video interviews from the final video product.

Key/Responsible Personnel:

Interim CalWORKs Coordinator, Hillina Jarso
Dean of Counseling & Student Success, Dr. Cynthia Olivo

Supporting Attachments:

Survey /Survey Results

Link to Video/Video Results

Summary of Findings:

SURVEY:

45 students completed the participant survey. Based on the survey responses, the students were overwhelmingly happy with the services they received. Three of the five Yes/No response questions had a 100% yes response. The other questions had a 95% response of “Yes” or “Very Satisfied/Satisfied.” The open-ended comments were also overwhelmingly positive, with few comments related to issues with GAIN, our laptop loan computer software, and a comment about staff awareness of students’ disadvantages.

As stated earlier, while the findings are positive, we are aware that students weren’t given the opportunity to express their responses through a broader response scale/spectrum. This would have provided us more insight in to the level of satisfaction the students have with their CalWORKs experience.

VIDEO INTERVIEWS:

All of the statements made by the four students in the video were positive, suggesting that they have had great experiences with the CalWORKs program. They also commented on their satisfaction with the EOPS program. The students seemed to feel that they mattered to the program and that CalWORKs has impacted their experience at Pasadena City College. Each of the students touched on the main goals of the SLO in their own statements, though they may have expressed it differently.

However, since all of the interview responses in the video were positive, it did not provide any data regarding areas for improvement.

Results:

Acceptable Target Achievement: Exceeded

Ideal Target Achievement : Exceeded

Recommendations for Improvement:

All of the interview statements and most of the survey responses were positive, but there were a few comments that suggested improvement. Based on the video, survey and other observations within CalWORKs, we gather the following recommendations:

- Develop and use an assessment format that will allow us to gather information strictly about CalWORKs, separate from the other programs mentioned (EOPS). This may help ensure that the students are able to speak specifically to services within our program scope and not “combine” their experiences.
- Develop a new tool that better assesses SLO #1.
- Develop assessment tools to measure other CalWORKs goals and service outcomes.
- Develop an electronic tool, such as survey monkey or google docs, that may help us to increase the number of responses we receive.
- Ensure that we have personnel to communicate with and assist students in resolving issues with GAIN workers.
- Investigate the idea of having a visiting GAIN worker on site.
- Increase communication with GAIN regions regarding PCC and PCC CalWORKs policies and procedures.
- Increase ways to connect with students and foster a community within the CalWORKs program.
- Increase number of counseling appointments made, rather than mostly front desk service experiences.

- Increase the number of work-study placements, as it was mentioned positively by a couple of the student in the video.
- Develop processes, practices and interventions to assist students who are on probation or in need of an updated educational plan.

Component B: External Accountability

The CalWORKs Program is externally accountable to the California Community College's State Chancellor's Office and Los Angeles County DPSS.

During the 2012-2013 academic year, DPSS conducted a site monitoring visit on April 24, 2012. The results of their review of randomly selected student files and civil rights requirements in the office indicated that we were in compliance. A combined report of results for 13 colleges was provided to the program.

On June 24, 2013 an interim audit was done, which included eligibility testing on CalWORKs student files.

All CalWORKs contracted and non-contracted employees are required to participate in LA County Civil Rights Training Academy and follow the County's civil rights policies.

Student Support Services: CalWORKs Program

ATTACHMENT 1: Survey & Results

1. Are/Were the services (completion of forms, answering questions, enrolling in courses) provided at (College) useful in assisting you to complete your educational program at (College)?
 - Yes – 44 (97.8%)
 - No – 1

COMMENT: I did not receive support needed to achieve goals
2. Is it easy to contact (College) and is staff friendly and knowledgeable?
 - Yes – 45 (100%)
 - No – 0

COMMENT: They are kind & perfect
3. Did the staff at (College) address your needs in a timely manner?
 - Yes – 45 (100%)
 - No – 0
4. Did (College) staff map out a plan for you to complete your educational program at (College)?
 - Yes – 44 (97.8%)
 - No – 1

COMMENTS: However unable to follow due to class openings
Academic Counselor did not give proper educational plan.

5. Were services provided in your primary language and was staff fluent in your primary language?

- Yes – 45 (100%)
- No – 0

COMMENT: NA No need

6. How do you rate the level of services provided to you by (College)?

- Very Satisfied – 38 (84.4%)
- Satisfied – 6 (13.3%)
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied – 1 (.02%)
- Dissatisfied – 0
- Very Dissatisfied – 0

7. Do you have any complaints or suggestion for improving services? *(Statements were typed exactly as written by the student.)*

- No I do not. I think they are doing an excellent job always here to help me and they always help me on time.
- Everything is great in my school campus. But for some reason my worker never receives my receipts. The college staff always has proof of sending me receipts, but my worker never gets them. My worker needs to be more organized.
- No :)
- Kiran is very helpful but is not in the office all the time. I think she is part time. It would be helpful if she was in the office more. When she is in, things are done fast and efficiently.
- Thank you for helping me with the school supplies. Great and friendly staff. I can always count on you guys for finishing college. Once again thank you :)
- No complaints love the staff very helpful
- Kiran is wonderful! Love her.
- Calworks at PCC is great. *It would be nice to have Microsoft 2010 on the Calworks laptop. Mozilla Firefox should be available as the internet browser.*
- I'm very satisfied with all the incredible help and assistance with everyone in Calworks Program @ PCC. *However, I am extremely disappointed with my reimbursement for supplies and parking. My understanding is that I was supposed to get reimbursed for my daily parking and supplies and my Gain Worker failed to do so.* I was only reimbursed for maybe 40% or less of my supplies and NO reimbursement for my parking. There needs to be more clarity or unified policy.
- No, I believe the Calworks program at PCC to be one of the most helpful programs offered. They have assisted me greatly in my time at PCC, and I am very appreciative of the effort and support of the CALWORKS staff.
- No complaints.
- Thanks! Great Services Always!! :)
- Thanks a lot for what ever you have done for me. I appreciate all.

- no there doing a good job
- I am very please with the help I receive; I don't know what I would have done without it.
- No. I'm quite grateful for Cal Works + the entire program!
- So far everything is great. Thankful to this assistance/program. Thank you :)
- I need Gain worker her in school.
- The staff is amazing a so friendly and helpful.
- Yes we need a full time councler I have not been able to do certain things because my Gain worker required Councilers approval This should be a mandatory requirement for the program. Only Calworks Counciler can work with me I have tried others and they are not qualified!
- Karin at the CalWorks office has been extremely helpful and informative since the first day I started at PCC.
- Everything is perfect! Good job!
- TUES OR THURSDAY WORKSHOPS (VERY FEW)
- no I do not, they do a great JOB.
- Staff should have the knowledge and some understanding of the disadvantages of the Participants in the program, that may cause rifts in pursuing an education.

ATTACHMENT 2: Interview Video & Statements

VIDEO LINK:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECBorN2iSng&list=PLIKXduhMiAzxdzIZpAggifduS2cpUfxXO&index=5>

Statements that were made that addressed the empowerment SLO in which the students felt ***personally acknowledged, valued, connected and more aware of his/her potential to achieve personal goals*** - include the following:

"Anything you need, CalWORKs is there to help you"

"Amazing thing to be 41 years old and realize that I have a future. That my dreams are achievable"

"I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for CalWORKs. I wouldn't have this opportunity."

"CalWORKs is another division I hold very dear to my heart. They have been an extreme blessing in my life"

"Staff members are excellent, especially in these programs. These programs have really embraced people like me."

"When I think it's too hard....Because I never had the positive influence in my life, they kind of step in and make it happen with you. So, a new comer to PCC will be in very good hands with these programs."

"...given me resources and tools to higher my education and succeed."

"With all the resources they have given me, they've pushed me to look deeper into myself and kind of understand that school is important. Having the counselors there if I need them, I know which direction I want to go in and they can help me with that."

"I think the staff and faculty, they are all willing to lend a hand; Really see you for your potential and kind of guide you with their wisdom and just being them. They're just awesome. ...without them I don't know where I would be. They give me that extra push. Just with their encouragement and letting me know that I can do whatever I can if I put my mind to it. I can succeed. ... They are like a family. ...a lending hand and a shoulder to cry on if I need them."

"They help me academically by keeping me on track."

"Personally, they have helped me by giving me encouragement. They have let me know that there are different ways to achieve what I want. I can go and I can succeed and I can finish... and I can go beyond an AA, I can get my Bachelors and go on to a Masters."