

CalWORKs County System Improvement Plan (Cal-SIP) Report

County: Santa Barbara

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Executive Summary

1. Please summarize the performance measures selected for improvement.

- OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate
- First Activity Attendance Rate
- Engagement Rate

It is the mission of the Santa Barbara County Department of Social Services to help our community be safe, supported, and self-sufficient. We believe that diversity, equity, and inclusion are foundational values that we center in both our agency culture and in our daily work. Our CalWORKs program is designed to meet each client and family where they are at and develop client-centered goals that are driven by the client with strong supports. We believe that each client/family has their own unique strengths and challenges. We utilize a strengths-based approach in serving our clients and work collaboratively with our many partners in the county to improve and enrich the lives of our community. The Cal-OAR process provides us with a structured framework to continuously strengthen and build upon our successful service delivery model with a continued eye on inclusiveness and equitable access. For this cycle, we will focus on goals that will help families engage early on in our program. We will help families identify barriers more quickly through our comprehensive Appraisal process (OCAT) and in turn ensure they are connected to a vast array of supports that are culturally appropriate and inclusive to the unique needs of our diverse population. We strive to create paths to success through a variety of unique ways to meet the goals of our county's clients and families.

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

Santa Barbara county seeks to improve their performance by implementing the following strategies:

OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate

Strategy 1: Employment Services staff to set block of time to meet with clients completing ORE to schedule OCAT/Appraisal (15-20 minutes) (With 3 Action Steps).

Strategy 2: Provide written incentive information to clients in regards to completing OCAT/Appraisal when meeting clients after ORE (With 1 Action Steps).

Strategy 3: Schedule reminder calls regarding OCAT/Appraisal 2-3 days before scheduled OCAT/Appraisal appointment (With 2 Action Steps).

Strategy 4: Ensure Staff is aware of and trained in regards to the OCAT/Appraisal Cal-OAR Timeliness Measure and is offering OCAT/Appraisal in the client's native language of English, Spanish, or Mixteco. (With 2 Action Steps).

First Activity Attendance Rate

Strategy 1: Ensure adequate education and access to childcare services for underserved populations by working with partner agencies such as Children's Resource & Referral and Santa Barbara County Office of Education to identify and understand the unique needs of the communities we serve, which in turn will assist in boosting first activity attendance rates (With 5 Action Steps).

Strategy 2: Expand access to transportation and clothing supportive services such as those in Northern Santa Barbara County, Lompoc, Goleta and other underserved areas as identified by stakeholder agencies (With 3 Action Steps).

Strategy 3: Provide tools to staff to promote and assist with the timely tracking of cases in the CalSAWS system in order to increase First Activity Attendance Rate (With 5 Action Steps).

Engagement Rate

Strategy 1: Educate staff and clients about activity engagement via various promotional materials on potential incentives to clients that are meeting the 90-day assessment timeline and/or working in unsubsidized employment. (With 5 Action Steps).

Strategy 2: Increase training opportunities for DSS staff that will include strategies on how to best communicate to clients the available services and courses provided at local educational institutions, as well as through our internal DSS Job Services unit. (With 5 Action Steps).

Strategy 3: Introduce and promote CalWORKs 2.0 philosophies amongst staff and clients (With 3 Action Steps).

Strategy 4: Increase the number of available supportive services vendors with a focus on clothing and transportation as identified by partners and create increased flexibility/options in regards to activities and supportive services issuances (With 5 Action Steps).

Strategy 5: Increase training for staff and supervisors in regard to engagement rates, in order to assist in the timeliness of CalSAWS entries and the monitoring of caseloads on a monthly basis. This will ensure the workload is being monitored to ensure productivity is measured more accurately. (With 5 Action Steps).

Introduction

The CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review (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) takes place over five-year cycles. The first Cal-OAR cycle commenced 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, of which 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.

The Santa Barbara County Department of Social Services utilized tools and data provided by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), as well as the CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review (Cal-OAR) website to plan and draft the CalWORKs System Improvement Plan (Cal-SIP) report. Tools were modified to adapt to Santa Barbara County's specific and unique needs including internal timelines, staffing levels, work plan, partner and collaborator identification, data analysis, and engagement processes. Santa Barbara County approached the Cal-SIP as an opportunity for the Department to further examine the current CalWORKs program, its services and supports, comprehensively and holistically, but to also hone in on specific performance measures that will produce the best outcomes for the current 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle. Additionally, stakeholder partner and collaborator engagement resulted in collaborative ongoing relationships for continuous quality improvement and an ongoing feedback circuit from which to gather additional information.

Santa Barbara County met with stakeholders, as well internal and external partners to gather feedback and insight related to the Cal-CSA and Cal-SIP. We conducted focus group interviews with clients and staff to develop our strategies and action steps in order to achieve our identified goals of improving the following identified performance measures:

- Initial Engagement: OCAT/Appraisal Timeliness Rates
- Initial Engagement: First Activity Attendance Rate (30 days)
- Ongoing Engagement: Improving the Overall Engagement Rate

As part of this process, Santa Barbara County also met several times with our selected peer County of Ventura both virtually and in person in order to learn about commonalities amongst our counties, review and provide input regarding our Cal-SIP goals, as well as to develop strategies on how to approach the Cal-SIP process.

Throughout this process, our Cal-OAR management and program teams continued to meet monthly to identify tasks as well as timelines in order to come up with strategies, strategic goals, as well as to gather additional feedback from our peer county and stakeholders related to the Cal-SIP. We also placed emphasis on ensuring that this process was able to meet the designated Cal-SIP deadline.

2. Briefly describe past and current system improvement efforts.

In the past, our county CalWORKs program utilized computer system AdHocs extracted from our computer system data in order to identify potential cases needing attention and then shared that information with line staff. This process included direct emails to staff and supervisors, as well as reminders at countywide Team Meetings and individualized unit meetings.

We provided our Employment Services staff with various tools and support programs to assist their client base including, in house behavioral wellness support services, access to supportive services for clients such as transportation, childcare, and ancillary payments, as well as additional support programs such as Family Stabilization Services, the Housing Support Program, and Cal-Learn for teen parents. Other tools available included access to virtual meeting equipment, Cell-Ed services, as well as an expanded Job Services Program and Employment Connection Center. Other available services included the JOB\$ ESE expanded subsidized employment program.

Our Job Services/Job Club program focuses on working with clients to ensure they have the education and training necessary to join a career path that leads to self-sufficiency. Job Services provides job search resources necessary to secure employment. Awhile these services provided some additional client engagement, and some clients found steady employment, we continued to work on ways to improve services as a county.

Our current efforts continue to include utilizing Job Services and the Job Services Connection Center model as a first activity steppingstone, as well as providing incentives for attendance of certain activities, such as attending the first day of Job Club. Other current strategies include soliciting team input from CalWORKs and Welfare to Work employment services staff and supervisors via Team Meetings, as well as analyzing CalSAWS program data and system reports in order to determine areas where we can improve performance and client engagement.

Despite the various tools and services including these components in our program design, our county has not previously engaged in a dedicated continuous quality improvement (CQI) effort to improve these components. Cal-OAR, along with the improvement areas in the Cal-SIP, will represent a dedicated effort to engage in CQI.

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

Client centered design tools that are currently being utilized by the County of Santa Barbara take several forms within our Department. These include in person interactive activity-based Job Services programs to meet both the clients and the County's business needs. Other tools available include our in-house Behavioral Wellness Department partnership RST Resource Support Team providing empathetic and readily available mental health services on site. Lastly, the Welfare-To-Work program currently offers various incentivized employment services activities that clients can take advantage of as part of their current employment plans.

Current performance measures include a goal of engaging 90% of employment services participants in an activity. Other performance measures that are client centered include the placing of 65% of the participants exiting our expanded subsidized employment program in unsubsidized employment.

Data sources utilized include system extracted AdHocs, current CalSAWS reports such as the REP report, state provided reports, as well as in house tracking of activities and engagement by employment services staff.

As a County, we found that feedback from internal staff, external stakeholder partners, and clients pointed to a need to explore gaps related to the how to engage clients in the post-COVID environment. The high need for homeless and mental health services in our client base will also be an opportunity for the County of Santa Barbara to address and strengthen partnerships and work more closely with other Departments such as Behavioral Wellness. The lack of access and training related to technology is also an area that the county will be able to address through this process. We also identified the need to offer additional training to internal staff on post-CalWORKs job support resources, as well as supportive service resources identified as needing additional attention by stakeholders such as additional transportation or clothing providers for current CalWORKs clients.

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

The Santa Barbara County Department of Social Services offers programs and services to help people maintain their health, improve their economic security, and protect their safety. We also administer several community networks to coordinate, improve upon, and report on services for children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities.

MISSION

Helping our community be safe, supported and self-sufficient.

VISION

The Santa Barbara County Department of Social Services envisions a thriving community of individuals and families who are resilient, socially integrated, safe, and self-sufficient. We envision a diverse and engaged workforce that is fully prepared to identify individual, family, and community needs; to administer federal, state and county programs equitably to meet those needs; and to establish inclusive partnerships that ensure collaborative solutions.

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.

The County of Santa Barbara conducted partner and collaborator engagement sessions as part of the Cal-CSA completion process, as well as facilitating a post-CSA information and feedback sharing session with the selected stakeholders. The purpose of the feedback session was to share the Cal-CSA results as well as solicit additional feedback from the partners related to the selected goal areas.

Based on these sessions and available data, our program identified three primary areas for improvement including, Initial Engagement: OCAT/Appraisal Timeliness, Initial Engagement: First Activity Attendance Rate (30 Days), and Ongoing Engagement: Engagement Rate. These areas were chosen due to the impact that increased client participation has on the families served in our program. Maximizing our time available with each participant enables the County of Santa Barbara to provide greater services more efficiently and in turn make positive impacts to our families we serve and on the impact measures of the program. These areas are currently program areas where we would like to see improvement and were validated by our partner agencies and peer county collaborators to help strengthen, expand, and grow in the identified areas.

While conducting a data analysis of the available information for our Cal-CSA report, we found an unsatisfactory amount of data available at this time to establish trends related to OCAT/Appraisal, as well as related to First Activity. Specifically, data for OCAT/Appraisal for the timeframe was only available for the month of May 2022, where the county had a rate of 22.9% and the state's rate for the comparable month was at 21.5%. For First Activity, the April 2021 to June 2022 data reviewed for this performance measure was also not available with the exception of October 2021, where the county had a rate of 55% compared to the state's measure of 48.1%. For both the OCAT/Appraisal and First Activity data, we found that much of the information was unavailable due to being de-identified to protect the identity of our clients. The inability to establish clear and reliable trends related to these areas helped contribute to the selection of these measures. Ongoing Engagement for the period of April 2021 to March 2022 had a range from 8.8% to 19.3%. This was lower than the state average of 16.4% to 22.8% for the same sample period. Due to this reason, Ongoing Engagement was also selected as a measure to improve. We will utilize these percentages as starting points for our SMART Goals to gradually improve throughout the Cal-SIP period.

Based on data, as well as the input of our partner agencies and staff, the County recognized that appraising a client's needs immediately, as well as offering immediate

services to quickly address those needs was important. Offering ongoing activities that can stabilize the challenges faced by our clients locally and keeping them engaged in those activities was also extremely important to their success. As a county, we feel that by improving our current program participant's engagement in approved WTW activities can also extend into and possibly improve the skillsets and employment opportunities for all clients. Current resources, incentives, and partnerships will continue to be utilized in order to increase current activity and post-job support that can be leveraged to increase opportunities for skill building, education, and employment retention.

Finally, we will utilize this Cal-SIP period and the measures identified as an opportunity to address areas pointed out as important by our stakeholders. This includes areas such as post-COVID engagement, the high need for homeless and mental health services, client's access to technology, challenges related to transportation and clothing issuances, as well as addressing the language barriers faced by our local Mixteco population.

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

Partners and collaborators provided direct feedback via the post-CSA presentations and surveys on these selected measures for targeted improvement.

While no specific priority between data metrics was identified, partners and collaborators did share that they agreed with the selected measures. Our stakeholders offered numerous ideas that fit within these selected improvement measures that will not only benefit the clients, but also potentially expand our collaborations and ultimately help us meet the identified goals of OCAT/Appraisal Timeliness, First Activity, and Ongoing Engagement.

As an agency, Santa Barbara County Social Services will seek to maximize these strategic partnerships to meet the goals of the Cal-Sip throughout the mandated Cal-OAR timeframe.

3. Describe any anticipated interactions with other measures.

All of the measures selected by the County of Santa Barbara Cal-OAR team are connected to client success including appraising needs quickly and timely, engaging clients quickly into meaningful activities, as well as ensuring a continuation of services and engagement throughout the family's time in the program.

Conducting the OCAT/Appraisal of a client timely assists the county in determining what are immediate needs that need to be addressed for the client to stabilize their current situation in order to take the next steps towards succeeding. This could include immediate needs such as housing or domestic violence, immediate mental health services, as well as the needs for supportive services such as child care or transportation.

After the initial identification and stabilization of needs via the appraisal process, it is then important to involve and engage the client in the selection of their first activity for their Welfare to Work plan. This can include attending classes or schooling, employment, attending Job Search/Job Club, or a continued assessment of critical needs that are a priority to the client using the CalWORKs 2.0 model.

Ongoing activities and engagement also serve an important role in the process. The ongoing engagement of the client in ongoing activities help ensure the client and family continue to gradually improve their current situation in all aspects, be it educations, employment advancement, a gradual improvement of wages, stabilization of housing, and improved mental and physical health. Ongoing engagement services can in post-aid or job retention services to decrease recidivism or program re-entries.

Due to the client centered focus of the selected performance measures, we expect them to cross over and positively impact other Cal-OAR measures including improving our Orientation attendance rates, reducing sanction rates for clients, and helping resolve current sanctions as well.

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

The CWD will be monitoring and analyzing the results of the proposed system improvement strategies for OCAT/Appraisal Timeliness, First Activity Attendance Rate, and Ongoing Engagement Rate on an ongoing systematic basis, using the Cal-OAR data dashboard, providing direction for correct system entries, and the reviewing of internal CalSAWS system and Ad Hoc reports. The monitoring of these reports, as well as other related data, such as activity participation tracking will assist us in meeting our goals and monitoring our progress.

The Cal-OAR team will host regular meetings to discuss the development and ongoing improvements/strategies aligned with these goals including staff education sessions, the implementation of proactive strategies based on partner and staff input, as well as developing new ways to monitor our progress towards the goals.

Additionally, we will continue engaging our current stakeholders, staff, and former clients through surveys, focus groups, and interviews to follow up on the results of our strategies.

Part 2: Goal-level Descriptions

Goal 1: Increase OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate to 40% from 23%. Review using CalSAWS Reports, State Cal-OAR Data, Internal Ad Hoc Reports improving by 8.5% every 12 months within 2 years (for a total of a 17.0% improvement).

Strategy 1: *Employment Services staff to set block of time to meet with clients completing ORE to schedule OCAT/Appraisal (15-20 minutes)*

Strategy 2: *Provide written incentive information to clients in regards to completing OCAT/Appraisal when meeting clients after ORE.*

Strategy 3: *Schedule reminder calls in English, Spanish, and Mixteco (when available) regarding OCAT/Appraisal 2-3 days before scheduled OCAT/Appraisal appointment.*

Strategy 4: *Ensure staff is aware of and trained in regards to the OCAT/Appraisal Cal-OAR Timeliness Measure and is offering OCAT/Appraisal in the client's native language of English, Spanish, or Mixteco.*

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

Santa Barbara County utilized the guidance of the monthly Cohort 2 Check- In Meetings, as well as stakeholder focus groups as directed by CDSS in order to select Increasing Engagement Rate as a focus area.

During the focus groups with our partners and collaborators, we used the Rose, Bud, Thorn process and participant surveys to determine what were the top priorities across the board for both our internal staff and external partners.

We also learned from our partners about the need to address other challenges that could affect clients' ability to participate in the OCAT/Appraisal process, such as those related to the access and training of technology in a post-pandemic environment, as well as addressing the needs of specialized populations by offering additional services in the languages most commonly utilized by clients in our service areas.

In addition to stakeholder and partner input, the County of Santa Barbara Cal-OAR team also utilized the available data provided by the statewide Cal-OAR data dashboard to assist in selecting this measure. Santa Barbara County had an average OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate average of 23%, compared to the statewide average of 34.3% for the same timeframe. Due to our average being lower than the statewide average, OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate was selected as a focus area. Santa Barbara County's goal will be to increase our OCAT/Appraisal Timeliness Rate to 40% from the current 23%. This will result in an increase of 17 percentage points over the next two years (8.5% per year) or a 74% growth increase overall for this measure.

2. What led the CWD to these improvement strategies?

Following the completion of the Cal-CSA, the County of Santa Barbara Cal-OAR team re-invited stakeholder partners to present our results. Included in those meetings was the request soliciting additional feedback on what types of strategies would be utilized to help improve the selected measures. We utilized the Rose, Bud, Thorn method, as well as post-meeting surveys to also gather additional information and feedback.

Santa Barbara County also met with Ventura County as part of the Peer Review Process. We listened to and solicited their feedback and input in regards to our goals and strategies as our counties were very similar in areas identified as needing attention, as well as the specialized needs voiced by our clients and stakeholders.

After this input was provided, we met with Ventura County's Cal-OAR team to brainstorm, explore, and identify specific strategies based on the selected measure and the feedback of our partner agencies. In order to ensure staff buy-in would occur as we moved forward with the Cal-SIP process, the task of selecting the strategies based on input was assigned to our employment services staff and supervisors for each region. This would ensure that each region in the county had an opportunity provide input and feedback on the proposed strategies and align them to goals that were specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely (using the SMART goals framework).

Focusing on improved engagement and timely completion of OCAT/Appraisal is an opportunity to reinforce to both clients and staff that DSS has begun to resume all aspects of our business to pre-pandemic levels with a focus on improved outcomes that strengthen the families we serve. We wanted to take into consideration designating specific staff time to make these entries as a strategy to ensure we meet the 30-day OCAT/Appraisal goal. We are also exploring the possibility of designating specific staff to make these CalSAWS entries as a possible best practice strategy and will further test out this possibility or efficiency. We also wanted to ensure clients are aware of their scheduled appointments and are given multiple opportunities to attend due to the challenges they may be facing post-COVID if needed, as well as being made aware of incentives available to them for completing this process. We will continue and expand on best practices, including the use of incentives in place to drive higher participation rates.

Lastly, we will conduct client awareness campaigns to ensure that our staff were informed and educated about the OCAT/Appraisal requirements and our improvement goals by providing additional refresher trainings, periodic one-on-one check ins, as well as focused supervisory case reviews to assist in meeting this focus measure.

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

The strategies developed by Employment Services staff and supervisors to support our clients in their efforts related to completing the OCAT/Appraisal process will be

demonstrated and followed through as part of the Cal-SIP process and practices. These efforts will be enhanced by the input from clients, the Cal-OAR team, and our community partners as the local CalWORKs program continues to consider new and innovative ideas to overcome these barriers.

Strategies chosen include the understanding that clients and staff will face challenges in creating re-entry plans in a post-COVID environment and through a trauma informed lens. Action steps will allow for staff to set aside specific time for CalSAWS entries, clients to be offered multiple opportunities to attend if necessary to reduce any type of sanctions, as well as clients being made aware of the availability of incentives and the services available, all tailored to meet where each client is at in their journey to self-sufficiency. Included will be promotional materials in multiple languages aimed to assist specialized populations that may require additional outreach so that we approach our improvement efforts through a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) lens.

As a UC Davis article dated 6/25/2020 states that “Leading the workforce back to the workplace is a monumental leadership task. COVID-19 has created, and will continue to present, remarkable challenges. Responsibilities of keeping staff physically safe while also attending to psychological and social issues triggered by this pandemic are novel and complex”. It continues that “The psychosocial effects of COVID-19 are expected to last much longer than the virus itself. Understanding and addressing these issues while creating a reentry plan is needed in order to optimize success. We all have been impacted in different ways by this pandemic. Some individuals will return stressed while others will return reenergized; some will not even return. The webinar addressed key psychosocial challenges and offered strategies to confront these issues. The goal is to minimize negative impacts and maximize adaptability, resilience, and post-traumatic growth in our workforce, as well as ourselves. More so than ever before, employees will be looking to their leaders for support, guidance, and direction.”

Reference:

Borucki, Jason (2020, June 6). [Leading Eligibility/Self-Sufficiency Services Through Crisis and Uncertainty: Navigating the Psychosocial Impacts of COVID-19](#). Retrieved July 19, 2023.

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

The roles of our partner agencies and stakeholder collaborators, both internal and external, in support of our Cal-OAR team efforts as we implement these strategies will be crucial to our success. Because our focus includes educating both staff and the client population about the OCAT/Appraisal timeframes and need for completion, support and incentives available, as well as the availability of services in multiple languages, we will need to ensure that stakeholder agencies are aware of these services as well.

Strong efforts will be made to be responsive to the requests made by our stakeholders in relation to adding additional services related to the technology needs of our clients. We are also looking to ensure that our staff is well trained and informed in regard to how to identify the technology needs of clients, as well as how to connect clients to training resources and how to issue supportive services that will help this effort. These strategies will be shared with stakeholder/collaborator agencies as well.

Included in our collaborative partner efforts will be informing partner agencies of our OCAT/Appraisal goals, the availability of multi-language services, as well as requesting that they help spread the word regarding the importance of its completion to our mutual clients and about the incentives available for that completion.

We will take collaborative steps with internal stakeholders such as our Administrative Office Professional and Eligibility staff to provide training and educate them on how their roles and efforts can assist in meeting these measures.

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

Additional staff training and ongoing education will be provided, to introduce the specific entries in the CalSAWS system that determine and affect the OCAT/Appraisal Timeliness Completion Rate.

We will be allowing employment services staff to set aside blocks of time two days per week to complete the required CalSAWS system entries, as well as look into having dedicated staff complete these entries as part of the process. Clients will be provided written information in their language regarding the process and incentives available for completing it in their language. Reminder calls will be made to afford multiple opportunities to attend and complete the process, since it is understood that many clients face challenges in a post-COVID environment.

We will empower staff to utilize technology whenever available to meet clients where they are at, including Zoom, Teams, or telephone-based services, in addition to face-to-face services. This hybrid model will allow the most flexibility for both clients and staff.

Since education and training will be an integral part of our plan, we will also provide training to clerical support and eligibility staff to emphasize their role in helping DSS in achieving our stated goals by ensuring they know their critical role in timely completing related CalSAWS system entries to register clients for services, which is an important pre-cursor to the OCAT/Appraisal process.

We will utilize continue to incentivize completion of OCAT/Appraisal to improve engagement of our clients in our program.

Various internal progress checks will be established that will include program team meetings, Cal-OAR workgroup meetings, supervisory one on one staff check ins, and

analysis of available system and state reports to monitor and adjust our strategies to ensure we are succeeding with our focus for this measure.

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

Returning to effective engagement approaches we had in place pre-pandemic is the goal. It is recognized the pandemic resulted in a decrease in engagement levels and created new challenges to the families we serve. In order to mitigate both internal and external barriers to achieving this completion timeliness goal, the County of Santa Barbara Cal-OAR team will utilize components that focus on human capital development through our current partnerships, as well as maximize the use of our current Department staff. Our approach will be to focus on meeting clients where they are at and understanding their current situation and needs first. We will then incorporate tailored strategies and approaches that would best ensure completion of the OCAT/Appraisal process. Staff will be afforded the necessary time required for successful completion of OCAT/Appraisal; giving them options to engage clients in a manner that best meets the need of the individual (e.g., meeting with clients in person or virtually), as well time to ensure necessary CalSAWS system entries are input timely and accurately.

The OCAT/Appraisal process and goal is an opportunity for the Employment Services program to triage and assist with immediate and ongoing needs, as well as assist clients in identifying the challenges they are facing. As part of this effort, we will utilize our current partnership with the Behavioral Wellness Department, as we currently have co-located licensed clinicians that are available to serve our employment services clients (referred to as our CalWORKs Resource Support Team).

Prioritizing timely completion of OCAT/Appraisal will be marketed and made a strategic priority for staff at all levels within the division/branch with emphasis on supporting staff and ensuring they have the latest tools and best practices in place to succeed. These strategies include addressing supportive services needs such as quality licensed childcare, transportation, and technology training as needed to complete the process.

Our county is dedicated to the continuous quality improvement (CQI) efforts related to Cal-OAR and the Cal-SIP focus strategy of OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness and we currently do not have any identified resource availability issues.

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.

Staff and stakeholder collaborators will be asked to provide direct feedback for targeted improvements related to OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness.

Each action step will be evaluated by collecting and analyzing ongoing data on clients, as well as receiving feedback on the process from both staff and clients alike. The County of Santa Barbara Cal-OAR team will continuously evaluate each action step taken to see if improvement is being achieved utilizing staff meetings, CalSAWS reports, Cal-OAR data reports, Ad Hoc reports, as well as in house supervisory reviews of performance.

The responsibility to oversee and monitor progress on our goals will be that of the Cal-OAR Department Business Specialist (DBS) staff, the sponsor managers, and the Cal-OAR team. This information will then be reported to district office managers and supervisors and if necessary, corrective action plans will be instituted to ensure continuous process improvement.

DBS staff will ensure that Cal-OAR and Cal-SIP strategies are a standing item in each CalWORKs/Welfare-To-Work team meeting, as well as ensuring that the Cal-OAR team is meeting at a minimum every other month to review the available reports and data to track progress to ensure compliance and the meeting of set goals and percentages performance measures.

The impact to the improvement strategies will be closely monitored over a 24-month period following final submission of the Cal-SIP report and will follow the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle, where evaluation of program pivots will lead to new strategies to improve outcomes for the CalWORKs families the County serves.

Goal 2: Increase First Activity Attendance Rate to 63% from 32%. Review using CalSAWS Reports, State Cal-OAR Data, Internal Ad Hoc Reports improving by 15.5% every 12 months within 2 years (for a total of a 31.0% improvement).

Strategy 1: *Ensure adequate education and access to childcare services for underserved populations by working with partner agencies such as Children’s Resource & Referral and Santa Barbara County Office of Education to identify and understand the unique needs of the communities we serve, which in turn will assist in boosting first activity attendance rates.*

Strategy 2: *Expand access to transportation and clothing supportive services such as those in Northern Santa Barbara County, Lompoc, Goleta and other underserved areas as identified by stakeholder agencies.*

Strategy 3: *Provide tools to staff to promote and assist with the timely tracking of cases in the CalSAWS system in order to increase First Activity Rate*

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

Santa Barbara County utilized data and guidance obtained during monthly Cohort 2 Check In meetings, as well as data gathered via stakeholder focus groups to select Increasing First Activity Attendance rate as a focus area to improve upon.

During the focus groups with our partners and collaborators, we used the Rose, Bud, Thorn process and participant surveys to determine what were the top priorities across the board for both our internal staff and external partners. These exercises pointed to a need to provide upfront supportive services such as quality licensed childcare, clothing, and transportation in order for clients to successfully attend and participate in their first activity. An additional strategy that was identified as needing addressing was the promotion of the incentives available to clients who attend the first day of their activity and/or successfully attend as scheduled in their employment services plan.

Staff also clearly identified a need for additional training on the first activity timeframes, processes, and the CalSAWS system entries related to the measure. Based on meeting with our peer county, we also identified that the additional tracking, review, and monitoring of the timing and CalSAWS system entries related to this measure would be crucial to our success.

Aside from stakeholder, staff, and partner input, the County of Santa Barbara Cal-OAR team also utilized the available data provided by the statewide Cal-OAR data dashboard to assist in selecting this measure. Santa Barbara County had an average First Activity Attendance Rate of 32% for the selected Cal-CSA timeframe, while the state average was at approximately 63% for the same timeframe. It should be noted that data for this timeframe was de-identified for certain months to protect client’s personal information.

Due to our average being lower than the statewide average during the available data months, as well as the strong support and suggestions of the stakeholders, the First Activity Attendance Rate was selected as a focus area. Santa Barbara County's goal will be to increase our First Activity Attendance Rate to 63% from the current 32%. This will result in an increase of 31 percentage points over the next two years (15.5% per year) and will represent a 97% growth increase overall for this measure.

2. What led the CWD to these improvement strategies?

After the completion of the Cal-CSA, the County of Santa Barbara Cal-OAR team reconvened stakeholder partners to present our Cal-CSA results. Additional input provided during those meetings helped guide our agreed upon strategies to utilize to help improve the selected measures. We utilized the Rose, Bud, Thorn method, as well as post-meeting surveys to also gather additional information and feedback.

We selected and met with Ventura County to conduct our Peer Review. We listened to and solicited their feedback and input in regard to our goals and strategies. We learned that our respective counties are very similar in many areas, including client demographics, organizational structure and in the identified measure that need attention. This further assisted us in deciding on our selected improvement strategies that coincided with the specialized needs voiced by our clients and stakeholders.

After this input was provided, we met with Ventura County's Cal-OAR team to brainstorm explore and identify specific strategies based on the selected measure and the feedback of our partner agencies. In order to ensure that staff buy-in would occur as we moved forward with the Cal-SIP process, the task of selecting the strategies based on input was assigned to our employment services staff and supervisors for each region. This would guarantee ensure that each individual region in the county had an opportunity would be able to take the provide input and feedback on the proposed strategies and personalize strategies and align them to goals that were specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely (using the SMART goals framework).

Throughout this process, we learned that education and providing clear information regarding timelines was extremely important to both staff and stakeholders alike. The need for staff to be trained in regard to the CalSAWS system entries is also necessary to meet the set goal. We learned from our partner agencies and clients themselves that addressing any pre-first activity supportive services needs, such as clothing, childcare, and transportation was essential to the success of this measure. We also learned that incentivizing attendance was something seen as favorable by all parties and that also will assist in meeting this measure.

Lastly, stakeholders felt that a crucial improvement strategy was the marketing of the goal via educational materials to both clients and staff alike. All of these ideas were incorporated into the strategies identified to meet our First Activity Attendance Rate goal.

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

The strategies developed by Employment services staff and supervisors to assist in increasing the First Activity Attendance Rate as part of the Cal-SIP process are supported by the input from stakeholder focus groups and feedback surveys from clients and community partners. They are also supported by the data from the program reporting systems, as well as the additional feedback provided by our peer county partner Ventura during the peer review process.

These efforts to meet the First Activity Attendance Rate will be enhanced by the input from clients, the Cal-OAR team, and our community supportive service providers, as the local CalWORKs program continues to consider new and innovative ideas to overcome these barriers.

Staff and clients will be educated on the importance of First Activity attendance and the importance of the identification of supportive service needs. Special trainings will be conducted for staff to ensure proper system entries in CalSAWS that populate statistical reports that are used to report on these measures.

According to the Administration For Children & Families report, “Family-centered, individualized services that support and promote family well-being. Some families need support beyond education and jobs to maintain economic security and promote individual and family well-being. These additional services may include emergency financial assistance, removing barriers to participation (such as transportation challenges), support in navigating public assistance programs and the courts, identifying and engaging with health and mental health services, and seeking to improve housing opportunities. Services may also involve up-front needs assessment and ongoing case management for the entire family. Supporting parents in this way could help balance and meet the often competing needs of work, school, and the care of children.”

It continues that in regards to child services, “Child services for children within programs that aim to meet the needs of children and parents simultaneously seek to promote healthy child development and children’s strong academic performance. These may include high quality center-based early care and education for children from infancy through prekindergarten (including Head Start and other community-based early care and education programs) as well as out-of-school programs for school-age children. Services that promote children’s emotional well-being and physical health supplement educational programming.”

Along with the input from stakeholder agencies and the data provided, the research article indicated above clearly supports the strategic and comprehensive approach being taken by Santa Barbara County of addressing and providing essential supportive services to clients such as quality childcare and transportation, to help meet First Activity Attendance Rates focus.

References:

Teresa Eckrich Sommer, P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, Emily Sama-Miller, Christine Ross, and Scott Baumgartner (2018, February 2). [Conceptual Frameworks for Intentional Approaches to Improving Economic Security and Child Well-being](#). Retrieved July 19, 2023.

[U.S Department of Health & Human Services](#) (Office of Planning, Research & Evaluation)

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

The roles of our partner agencies and stakeholder collaborators, both internal and external, in order to implement the strategies tied in First Activity Attendance Rate will be a crucial component to our success. For this measure, much of the responsibility will belong to the internal county employment services staff. Staff will play a major role in ensuring that clients and collaborators/partners such as Children's Resource and Referral, Santa Barbara County Office of Education, Allan Hancock College/Santa Barbara City College/Adult Education, as well as the various local independent supportive service providers are aware of our goals of meeting the client's pre-activity attendance needs.

Because our focus also includes educating our participants about the importance of attending their first post plan signing activity, we will be expanding our outreach materials being provided to agencies and activity providers in the community such as local colleges, the Job Services program offices, as well as the local childcare licensing agencies. Our program management and analysts all participate in established partnership meetings where our input is provided so that partner agencies understand the needs of the CalWORKs population. Among established partnerships we are actively involved in includes, First Five Commission and Advisory Board, Child Care Planning Council and community college Advisory Boards. Further, through our partnership in the local America's Job Center of California, we are able to advocate for programs that expand childcare capacity building by partnering with agencies that can train current CalWORKs participants to become licensed childcare providers which includes quality child care certification. This will support the efforts to train and support licensed child care providers for our participants in our service areas.

Strong efforts will also be made to be responsive to the requests made by our stakeholders in relation to adding additional clothing vendors, technology, and transportation resources. We will be sure to provide direct input to our local Association of Government agency to inform them of unmet transportation needs of our CalWORKs families as well as establishing new partnerships with local retailers to broaden our clothing vendors available to our clients.

We will take collaborative steps such as offering trainings, as well as providing expanded program flyers and How To's to our staff for distribution so that staff are aware of all existing and newly expanded resources that are available to their clients.

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

Additional staff training and ongoing education will be provided, to introduce the specific entries in the CalSAWS system that determine and affect the First Activity Attendance Rate.

We will be reviewing current business processes to identify areas that can place more emphasis on the First Activity Attendance rate. We will prioritize supportive services, especially quality childcare, transportation, and the expansion of clothing services for clients.

Client education and training pre-WTW plan signing and prior to the First Activity will also be an integral part of our plan. We will utilize incentives to encourage clients to attend these learning sessions.

We will also utilize various checkpoints before, during, and after the First Activity process to track our progress. This includes regularly scheduled worker check-ins and Q&A's, to educate the staff on our progress and any changes related to the availability of supportive services. Technical assistance will be necessary in the form of reports that will be available on the extracted data for First Activity Attendance. This includes accessing data from both CalSAWS and potentially in house AdHocs.

With innovation and new solutions, clients will have a clear understanding on how they can successfully attend their first post-plan activity. These educational and training strategies will also serve as a steppingstone for continued ongoing engagement.

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

The county CalWORKs program plans to utilize our current strategic partnerships with local childcare agencies, as well as expand the range of service providers in order to mitigate the known external barriers of childcare, clothing, and transportation needs.

We plan to utilize Department Business Specialist (DBS) staff to provide training for Employment Services staff in best practices and step by step procedures regarding the First Activity measure, including accurate and effective completion of the OCAT/Appraisal process, to best identify barriers and educate clients on how to access expanded supportive services.

Since the major strategy to meet this goal is based on the addressing of supportive services needs such as quality licensed childcare, transportation, and clothing prior to the activity, we will ensure that we are partnering with service providers and clearly

making this information available in the most common languages utilized by the clients in our regions.

Our county is dedicated to the continuous quality improvement (CQI) efforts of our Cal-SIP strategies. We do not have any identified resource availability issues tied into meeting this goal.

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.

Partners, staff, and stakeholder collaborators will be asked to provide direct feedback for targeted improvements to the First Activity Attendance rate. We will ensure that we are continuously evaluating our progress and monitoring the availability of crucial supportive services including quality licensed child care, and expanded clothing/transportation options. We will also ensure that marketing materials promoting the availability of supportive service, including incentives are widely shared. We will also collect and analyze ongoing data on clients and input from partners to develop new strategies to strengthen our current efforts at meeting our First activity rate goals.

The County of Santa Barbara Cal-OAR team will continuously evaluate each action step on a monthly and quarterly basis and incorporate it into our business processes. We will utilize staff meetings, CalSAWS reports, Cal-OAR data reports, Ad Hoc reports, as well as supervisory reviews.

The responsibility to oversee and monitor progress on our goals will be that of the Cal-OAR Department Business Specialist (DBS) staff, the sponsor manager, and the Cal-OAR team. This information will then be reported to district office managers and supervisors and if necessary, corrective action plans will be instituted to ensure continuous process improvement.

DBS staff will ensure that Cal-OAR and Cal-SIP strategies are a standing item in each CalWORKs/Welfare-To-Work team meeting, as well as ensuring that the Cal-OAR team is meeting every other month to review the available reports and data to track progress to ensure compliance and the meeting of set goals and performance measures.

The impact to the improvement strategies will be closely monitored over a 24-month period following final submission of the Cal-SIP report and will follow the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle, where evaluation of program pivots will lead to new strategies to improve outcomes for the CalWORKs families the County serves.

Goal 3: Increase Engagement Rate to 30% from 19%. Review using CalSAWS Reports, State Cal-OAR Data, Internal Ad Hoc Reports increasing by 5.5% every 12 months within 2 years (for a total of a 11.0% improvement).

Strategy 1: *Educate staff and clients about activity engagement via various promotional materials on potential incentives to clients that are meeting the 90-day assessment timeline and/or working in unsubsidized employment.*

Strategy 2: *Increase training opportunities for DSS staff that will include strategies on how to best communicate to clients the available services and courses provided at local educational institutions, as well as through our internal DSS Job Services unit.*

Strategy 3: *Introduce and promote CalWORKs 2.0 philosophies amongst staff and clients.*

Strategy 4: *Increase the number of available supportive services vendors with a focus on clothing and transportation as identified by partners and create increased flexibility/options in regards to activities and supportive services issuances.*

Strategy 5: *Increase training for staff and supervisors in regard to engagement rates, in order to assist in the timeliness of CalSAWS entries and the monitoring of caseloads on a monthly basis. This will ensure the workload is being monitored to ensure productivity is measured more accurately.*

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

Santa Barbara County utilized data and guidance obtained during monthly Cohort 2 Check-In Meetings, as well as data gathered via stakeholder focus groups to select Increasing First Activity Attendance rate as a focus area to improve upon.

During the focus groups with our partners and collaborators, we used the Rose, Bud, Thorn process and participant surveys to determine what were the top priorities across the board for both our internal staff and external partners. These exercises pointed to a need to train and educate both staff and clients related to the engagement rate timelines and rules, as well as leading to the discovery of additional needed vendors and resources for both clothing and transportation supportive services countywide. Partner and stakeholder feedback was very beneficial to this process.

Aside from stakeholder and partner input, the County of Santa Barbara Cal-OAR team also utilized the available data provided by the statewide Cal-OAR data dashboard to assist in selecting this measure. Santa Barbara County had an average engagement rate of 19% for the selected Cal-CSA timeframe, while the state average was at approximately 21.3% for the same timeframe. Due to our average being lower than the statewide average, the Engagement Rate was selected as a focus area. Santa Barbara County's goal will be to increase our Ongoing Engagement Rate to 30% from the

current 19%. This will result in an increase of 11 percentage points over the next two years (5.5% per year) and will represent a 58% growth increase overall for this measure.

2. What led the CWD to these improvement strategies?

After the completion of the Cal-CSA, the County of Santa Barbara Cal-OAR team re-convened stakeholder partners to present our Cal-CSA results. Additional input provided during those meetings helped guide our agreed upon strategies to utilize to help improve the selected measures. We utilized the Rose, Bud, Thorn method, as well as post-meeting surveys to also gather additional information and feedback.

We selected and met with Ventura County to conduct our Peer Review. We listened to and solicited their feedback and input in regard to our goals and strategies. We learned that our respective counties are very similar in many areas, including client demographics, organizational structure and in the identified measure that need attention. This further assisted us in deciding on our selected improvement strategies that coincided with the specialized needs voiced by our clients and stakeholders.

After this input was provided, we met with the County's Cal-OAR team to brainstorm explore and identify specific strategies based on the selected measure and the feedback of our partner agencies. In order to ensure staff, buy-in would occur as we moved forward with the Cal-SIP process, the task of selecting the strategies based on input was assigned to our employment services staff and supervisors for each region. This would ensure that each region in the county had an opportunity provide input and feedback on the proposed strategies and align them to goals that were specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely (using the SMART goals framework).

Through this process, we learned that education and providing clear information regarding timelines is extremely important to both staff and stakeholders alike. It is also recognized that meeting clients where they are at and tailoring our engagement approach to meet the needs of each client utilizing the CalWORKs 2.0 framework is essential to meeting our stated goals. We wanted to ensure that we addressed concerns regarding supportive services needs for clients that were brought up by our partner agencies, as well as come up with specific internal strategies to enter, meet, and monitor the progress of these engagement goals, while maintaining a client focused approach.

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

The strategies developed by Employment services staff and supervisors to increase the available options for transportation and clothing in our community will be carried through as part of the Cal-SIP process and practices. These efforts will be enhanced by the input from clients, the Cal-OAR team, and our community partners as the local

CalWORKs program continues to consider new and innovative ideas to overcome these barriers.

Staff and clients will be educated in the CalWORKs 2.0 framework, which is a “new approach focused on helping people set and achieve their own goals, which requires a flexible approach and a shift from directive case management to customer-led case management. The redesigned approach will help families set goals that are aligned with program aims while taking into account families’ strengths and the obstacles they face. With CalWORKs supports and services, some customers are able to begin immediately, but others need time to resolve higher level barriers and address significant challenges before they can progress. CalWORKs 2.0 emphasizes the importance of engaging in activities on the way to full employment. While this is a fundamental shift for some counties, other counties may already be implementing some of these concepts into their current work.”

Reference

[CalWORKs 2.0 Program Reference Guide](#) (2018, May). Retrieved July 18, 2023.

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

The roles of our partner agencies and stakeholder collaborators, both internal and external, in support of our Cal-OAR team efforts as we implement these strategies will be crucial to our success. Because our focus includes educating both staff and the client population about the engagement rate process, activities available, as well as the expanding of additional supportive services and resources related to clothing and transportation, we will need to ensure that stakeholder agencies are aware of these services as well.

Concerted efforts will be made to expand the pool of available clothing vendors and alternative transportation resources address the requests made by our staff and stakeholders during our Cal-CSA process.

Included in our collaborative partner efforts will be meeting with and exploring new ideas to address the specific needs of our student populations at the local community colleges and adult education sites. This will potentially include “field trips” and orientation days for new and potential students.

We will take collaborative steps such as staff created newsletters and Did You Know’s for clients and partners alike, which will inform them of the expanded services that will be available.

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

Additional staff training and ongoing education will be provided, to introduce entries in the CalSAWS system that determine and affect the Engagement Rate. We will be training staff on the CalWORKs 2.0 philosophies in order to ensure that we are utilizing a client focused, goal-oriented approach to engagement. We will be reviewing current business processes to identify areas that can place more emphasis on the engagement rate goal. We will also emphasize job shadowing in order for staff to gain a better understanding of Employment Services and Job Services staff job functions. This will raise awareness of the client experience and open the lines of communication to provide all around better service to participants during the monthly contacts.

Staff is being enabled to develop, design, and implement quality improvement solutions that will help meet clients where they are, which will be demonstrated by the creation of informational newsletters, training for clients on goal setting and other CalWORKs 2.0 based skills to support them through the most challenging times.

Education and training to staff will be an integral part of our plan. We will utilize incentives for clients in order to try to ensure that attendance to these training and learning sessions will occur. We will also utilize various checkpoints throughout the engagement process including monthly worker meetings, to educate the client on the availability of supportive services and the expanded resources that will be available. Lastly, we will ensure that the needs of clothing, transportation, and childcare are addressed prior to any scheduled activity or appointment.

With innovation and new solutions, clients will have an opportunity to maximize their engagement in the program, mitigate barriers to their success, and set attainable goals using the CalWORKs 2.0 framework. These strategies will serve to not only increase engagement, but also serve as a foundation for strong client-worker-stakeholder partner agency relationships.

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

The county CalWORKs program utilizes components that focus on human capital development through our current partnerships, as well as educational resources made available to our clients through our robust Job Services program, including our Employment Connection Centers located in every office. Our Job Services program focuses on working with clients to ensure they have access to tools necessary to prepare for and reach their employment goals.

For clients who strive to attend schooling, we will maximize our current partnerships with local community college CalWORKs programs. These programs offer a coordination of services for the client in conjunction with our employment services staff. We currently have strong collaborations and communication with our local community college and adult education programs and even have outstationed WTW employment services staff at our largest community college.

Both of these strategies include goal setting, career pathway identification, as well as the addressing of supportive services needs such as licensed childcare, transportation, clothing, as well as behavioral wellness services to succeed in their goals set.

Our county is dedicated to the continuous quality improvement (CQI) efforts related to Cal-OAR and the Cal-SIP strategies. We do not have any identified resource availability issues.

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.

Partners, staff, and stakeholder collaborators will be asked to provide direct feedback for targeted improvements, such as the review of and improvements to the translation of the CalWORKs forms for non-English speakers in terms of expanded clothing and transportation options.

We will collect and analyze ongoing data on clients and input from partners to explore educational workshop opportunities for clients.

The County of Santa Barbara Cal-OAR team will continuously evaluate each action step taken to see if improvement is being achieved utilizing staff meetings, CalSAWS reports, Cal-OAR data reports, Ad Hoc reports, as well as supervisory reviews.

The responsibility to oversee and monitor progress on our goals will be that of the Cal-OAR Department Business Specialist (DBS) staff, the sponsor manager, and the Cal-OAR team. This information will then be reported to district office managers and supervisors and if necessary, corrective action plans will be instituted to ensure continuous process improvement.

DBS staff will ensure that Cal-OAR and Cal-SIP strategies are a standing item in each CalWORKs/Welfare-To-Work team meeting, as well as ensuring that the Cal-OAR team is meeting at a minimum every other month to review the available reports and data to track progress to ensure compliance and the meeting of set goals and percentages performance measures.

The impact to the improvement strategies will be closely monitored over a 24-month period following final submission of the Cal-SIP report and will follow the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle, where evaluation of program pivots will lead to new strategies to improve outcomes for the CalWORKs families the County serves.

Section 2: Peer Review

Peer county/ counties selected for collaboration and consultation:

Ventura

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

The Cal-OAR peer review process positively impacted Santa Barbara County's Cal-SIP plan development. Santa Barbara County was able to connect with our peer county Ventura over the course of several meetings both virtually and in-person, in order to review the Cal-CSA and the identified performance improvement measures, gain feedback and input related to the selected improvement goals, as well as to discuss and develop improvement strategies in the Cal-SIP.

A discovery that occurred as part of the process was the similarity in goals and the population served amongst our counties. Ventura County was able to share their internal Cal-OAR organization structure with us. This provided helpful insight into where our county should consider allocating resources to positively impact the Cal-SIP improvement goals and outcomes. We believe that many of the strategies recommended by Ventura County as part of the peer review process will be transferable to our operations and processes.

Based on the feedback provided, we anticipate making adjustments to some parts of our internal processes related to the improvements identified in our Cal-SIP, which will in turn positively impact the clients we serve. Further, this peer partnership allowed for Santa Barbara County to gain additional insight and technical assistance, not only from the CDSS, but from a neighboring county that is experiencing similar circumstances, challenges, and opportunities in serving our client population.

2. Discuss steps taken to conduct peer review.

After submission of the CSA, Santa Barbara County reached out to several counties in order to form a partnership related to the Cal-SIP process. We determined that due to proximity, being part of the same cohort, as well as their county's availability to schedule and meet within the required Cal-SIP timeframes, that Ventura County was an excellent choice to be our peer county.

We had two meetings where each of us served as both "host" and "peer" county to review each of our CSA reports and to discuss best practices for improvement. As a follow up to each of these meetings, each county provided feedback to the other via input forms and surveys. Our initial meeting included the state Cal-OAR Specialist as observers to provide guidance if necessary.

Prior to each meeting, each county developed an agenda based on the example given by CDSS in the Peer Review Toolkit. Each meeting included a PowerPoint Overview, feedback form, as well as a post meeting survey to share experiences, ideas, and provide additional feedback.

Ventura County served as the host for the first meeting, which was virtual and walked us through their CSA report and highlighted that their improvement focus including their goals of Increasing the Engagement Rate and OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness. Santa Barbara County benefited from Ventura County's prior peer partnership with Orange County, as they had also served as a peer county for them and had hosted a prior peer review with them, which allowed us to follow a similar process, outline, and format. Approximately a few weeks afterwards and now serving as host, Santa Barbara County then presented our CSA overview, request for feedback, as well as an opportunity for interactive discussion and a brief question and answer period.

Throughout this process, we discovered many similarities between the two counties, including our choice to focus on the common goals of improving OCAT/Appraisal Timeliness and improving the Engagement Rate. We continue to interact with Ventura County as part of this process. Other collaboration since the Cal-SIP peer review included attending a mutually beneficial Cal-SIP coaching seminar, as well as providing an employment services CalSAWS Resource Data bank overview for Ventura staff. We were extremely thankful for our opportunity to partner with Ventura County as we found their staff to be well versed in the Cal-OAR process, as well as forward thinking and open to communicating and providing feedback.

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

Our Ventura County peer review partners provided direct feedback for targeted improvement both via in person meetings, virtually over Microsoft Teams, as well as via electronic feedback forms. We identified several business processes that may be transferrable in our county and have included these strategies for improving both our OCAT/Appraisal Timeliness and our Ongoing Engagement Rate goals.

As part of the peer review, Ventura County also helped identify other areas where process improvements could be made. Suggestions included making adjustments to the resources dedicated to the Cal-OAR project in order to assist in meeting the required Cal-SIP timeframes. They also suggested implementing a best practice of identifying ways to streamline service delivery and improve efficiency by utilizing improvement strategies and tools such as the Lean Six Sigma process, as well as maximizing the use of the Microsoft Teams applications to assist with the Cal-OAR and partner team interactions. Additional suggestions included developing stronger relationships with local multi-lingual services organizations to improve engagement of our specialized populations, as well as providing mandated Trauma Informed refresher training every two years to all county staff.

Feedback related to OCAT/Appraisal timeliness included utilizing administrative support staff who enters the activity into CalWIN/CalSAWS as this creates consistency with system entries, combining Orientation and OCAT/Appraisal into one appointment, and developing an Orientation video that will help reduce the Orientation timeframe and standardized the information provided to clients. Lastly, a suggestion was made to utilize technology to serve clients virtually, but also to offer in-person appointments if preferred, and thus creating flexibility for clients who encountered barriers such as childcare from participating.

Regarding Initial Engagement: First Activity Attendance Rate, Ventura County suggested developing engagement opportunities for clients to participate in services such as the Digital Literacy Project through Job Services, known in their county as (PrEP), providing clients with laptops and training necessary to participate in activities, and identifying areas of concern through monthly case reviews by supervisors and leads. Ventura County also suggested utilizing a Farm Worker Resource program (comprised of Mixteco workers) to engage and build trust with our farm worker population.

For the goal of Ongoing Engagement Rate, our Ventura County peers identified possibly reducing the workload and tasks for each employment services caseworker as a potential strategy. For example, childcare services may either be contracted or provided by a specialized team. Other ideas included maximizing the use of technology for providing services appropriate for the participant to ensure services are provided through a DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) lens. For example, clients with limited digital literacy may need hands-on assistance versus those who are proficient.

We felt that this collaborative process has helped build a successful working relationship between our counties, which we will strive to maintain post Cal-OAR. The ideas shared by Ventura County will be incorporated into action items as well as SMART goals included in our Cal- SIP plan. The input, identification of potential barriers, as well as the strategies shared above will be beneficial to our client population and our stakeholder partner agencies, helping them to better understand the services available, as well as the steps we are taking to accomplish the goals set forth in the Cal-SIP.

Section 3: Target Measure Summary

Goal 1: Increase OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate to 40% from 23%. Review using CalSAWS Reports, State Cal-OAR Data, Internal Ad Hoc Reports improving by 8.5% every 12 months within 2 years (for a total of a 17.0% improvement).

Performance Measure: OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate

Baseline Result: 23%

Cal-SIP Start Time: 02/01/2024	Progress Report #1: 02/21/2025	Progress Report #2: 03/27/2026	Cycle End Date: 06/30/2026
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Strategies, Action Steps, and Tracking Improvement:

Strategy 1: Employment Services staff to set block of time to meet with clients completing ORE to schedule OCAT/Appraisal (15-20 minutes).

Action Steps:

- Block off 15 to 20 minutes two days per week per staff member to meet with assigned clients that complete ORE.
- Identify those newly granted that are attending ORE to prioritize completing OCAT/Appraisal in order to meet the 30-day deadline.
- Have dedicated staff available to complete OCAT/Appraisal same day after completing ORE and have incentive be issued the same day by staff member completing OCAT/Appraisal or alternate designated staff.

Strategy 2: Provide written incentive information to clients in regards to completing OCAT/Appraisal when meeting clients after ORE.

Action Step:

- Work with local community agencies such as (but not limited to) Proyecto Mixteco Advocacy to create a flyer to include information on incentives for completing OCAT/Appraisal timely. We will make this flyer available in multiple languages including those languages most commonly spoken in our service regions such as English, Spanish, and Mixteco. To be inclusive of all languages and client needs, Santa Barbara County will also provide access to interpreters or special accommodations as needed to ensure we meet every client's needs through a DEI lens.

Strategy 3: Schedule reminder calls in English, Spanish, and Mixteco (when available) regarding OCAT/Appraisal 2-3 days before scheduled OCAT/Appraisal appointment.

Action Steps:

- Explore finding JOB\$/ESE subsidized employment program participants who represent the diverse backgrounds of our clientele to assist with OCAT/Appraisal reminder calls.
- If 1st appointment for in person is unsuccessful, workers will have the flexibility to offer alternative methods including video conference via Zoom or Teams (if client has access and is trained in its use) or over the phone in order to complete both ORE and OCAT/Appraisal.

Strategy 4: Ensure staff is aware of and trained in regards to the OCAT/Appraisal Cal-OAR Timeliness Measure and is offering OCAT/Appraisal in the client's native language of English, Spanish, or Mixteco.

Action Steps:

- Department Business Specialist (DBS) to provide WTW/Cal-OAR measures presentation for AOP Administrative Office Professional/Eligibility Workers and Employment Service staff with an equity and inclusion lens, in order to educate staff on measures and get staff buy in from everyone, as well as to explain how their role is vital for the county to reach these measures.
- Ensure EW's during CalWORKs intake interview and RE Renewals are registering WTW participants timely and accurately in the CalSAWS system by utilizing monthly Ad Hoc and Supervisor focused case reviews.

Tracking Improvement:

Staff and stakeholder collaborators will be asked to provide direct feedback for targeted improvements related to OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness.

Each action step will be evaluated by collecting and analyzing ongoing data on clients, as well as receiving feedback on the process from both staff and clients alike. The County of Santa Barbara Cal-OAR team will continuously evaluate each action step taken to see if improvement is being achieved utilizing staff meetings, CalSAWS reports, Cal-OAR data reports, Ad Hoc reports, as well as in house supervisory reviews of performance.

The responsibility to oversee and monitor progress on our goals will be that of the Cal-OAR Department Business Specialist (DBS) staff, the sponsor managers, and the Cal-OAR team. This information will then be reported to district office managers and

supervisors and if necessary, corrective action plans will be instituted to ensure continuous process improvement.

DBS staff will ensure that Cal-OAR and Cal-SIP strategies are a standing item in each CalWORKs/Welfare-To-Work team meeting, as well as ensuring that the Cal-OAR team is meeting at a minimum every other month to review the available reports and data to track progress to ensure compliance and the meeting of set goals and percentages performance measures.

The impact to the improvement strategies will be closely monitored over a 24-month period following final submission of the Cal-SIP report and will follow the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle, where evaluation of program pivots will lead to new strategies to improve outcomes for the CalWORKs families the County serves.

Goal 2: Increase First Activity Attendance Rate to 63% from 32%. Review using CalSAWS Reports, State Cal-OAR Data, Internal Ad Hoc Reports improving by 15.5% every 12 months within 2 years (for a total of a 31.0% improvement).

Performance Measure: First Activity Attendance Rate

Baseline Result: 32%

Cal-SIP Start	Progress Report #1:	Progress Report #2:	Cycle End Date:
Time: 02/1/2024	02/21/2025	03/27/2026	06/30/2026

Strategies, Action Steps, and Tracking Improvement:

Strategy 1: Ensure adequate education and access to childcare services for underserved populations by working with partner agencies such as Children’s Resource & Referral and Santa Barbara County Office of Education to identify and understand the unique needs of the communities we serve, which in turn will assist in boosting first activity attendance rates.

Action Steps:

- Provide information on childcare and how to access quality child care services to clients during the WTW Orientation process in multiple languages including English, Spanish, and Mixteco
- Work with external partners such as Children’s Resource and Santa Barbara County Office of Education in order to train and source additional qualified licensed childcare providers who represent and reflect the diverse population of the clients, we serve countywide.
- Employment Services staff will review the CalSAWS Hyland Imaging System for the CCP 7 Childcare request form as needed to ensure that the ability to access child care was offered to every client as part of every CalWORKs Application
- Provide clients and external partner referral agencies with written guidance on available childcare resources and steps to obtaining childcare in their local communities, including adding additional information to our materials for underserved populations such as services for developmentally disabled children provided by Alpha Resource Center and Sojourn who assist these client populations.
- Expand GTKY Getting to Know You form to include child care status, as well as questions related to inclusivity by soliciting feedback from local partner agencies using an equity lens.

Strategy 2: Expand access to transportation and clothing supportive services such as those in Northern Santa Barbara County, Lompoc, Goleta and other underserved areas as identified by stakeholder agencies.

Action Steps:

- DBS Department Business Specialist (DBS)/Analyst staff to provide training for Employment Service staff on available countywide transportation and clothing options and benefits within six months of the approval of the Cal-SIP plan and on regular ongoing intervals using a DEI focus and lens.
- Provide clients with written guidance on available transportation and clothing benefits within one working day of their enrollment, including supportive services and resources specific to their region including any payment and amounts available.
- Explore with external partners such as community colleges, stakeholder providers, etc. on methods to expand transportation options utilizing existing resources in underserved communities such as those in Northern Santa Barbara County.

Strategy 3: Provide tools to staff to promote and assist with the timely tracking of cases in the CalSAWS system in order to increase First Activity Rate.

Action Steps:

- Conduct a marketing campaign adding Cal-OAR goals, as well as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion measures as a standing agenda items during Employment Services meetings to ensure we are establishing a culture of inclusivity and reaching our DEI goals.
- Employment Services supervisors to provide staff with CalSAWS and Ad Hoc reports with open activities and cases without updated status and attendance hours on a monthly basis.
- Conduct a marketing campaign with the focus of staff making timely entries in CalSAWS and ensure that the campaign promotes equitable representation for all staff.
- Unit incentives, contests, and challenges for meeting First Activity entry requirement deadlines
- Department Business Specialist (DBS) Analyst staff to provide a How To document and training in regard to appropriate CalSAWS entries, including deadlines related to Cal-OAR performance measures. Training staff will ensure that CalWORKs 2.0 philosophies are shared throughout, including our strong commitment to having staff meet our client where they are at using an inclusive lens, so there are no barriers to clients receiving or accessing services.

Tracking Improvement:

Partners, staff, and stakeholder collaborators will be asked to provide direct feedback for targeted improvements to the First Activity Attendance rate. We will ensure that we are continuously evaluating our progress and monitoring the availability of crucial supportive services including quality licensed child care, and expanded clothing/transportation options. We will also ensure that marketing materials promoting the availability of supportive service, including incentives are widely shared. We will also collect and analyze ongoing data on clients and input from partners to develop new strategies to strengthen our current efforts at meeting our First activity rate goals.

The County of Santa Barbara Cal-OAR team will continuously evaluate each action step on a monthly and quarterly basis and incorporate it into our business processes. We will utilize staff meetings, CalSAWS reports, Cal-OAR data reports, Ad Hoc reports, as well as supervisory reviews.

The responsibility to oversee and monitor progress on our goals will be that of the Cal-OAR Department Business Specialist (DBS) staff, the sponsor manager, and the Cal-OAR team. This information will then be reported to district office managers and supervisors and if necessary, corrective action plans will be instituted to ensure continuous process improvement.

DBS staff will ensure that Cal-OAR and Cal-SIP strategies are a standing item in each CalWORKs/Welfare-To-Work team meeting, as well as ensuring that the Cal-OAR team is meeting every other month to review the available reports and data to track progress to ensure compliance and the meeting of set goals and performance measures.

The impact to the improvement strategies will be closely monitored over a 24-month period following final submission of the Cal-SIP report and will follow the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle, where evaluation of program pivots will lead to new strategies to improve outcomes for the CalWORKs families the County serves.

Goal 3: Increase Engagement Rate to 30% from 19%. Review using CalSAWS Reports, State Cal-OAR Data, Internal Ad Hoc Reports increasing by 5.5% every 12 months within 2 years (for a total of a 11.0% improvement).

Performance Measure: Engagement Rate

Baseline Result: 19%

Cal-SIP Start	Progress Report #1:	Progress Report #2:	Cycle End Date:
Time: 02/01/2024	02/21/2025	03/27/2026	06/30/2026

Strategies, Action Steps, and Tracking Improvement:

Strategy 1: Educate staff and clients about activity engagement via various promotional materials on potential incentives to clients that are meeting the 90-day assessment timeline and/or working in unsubsidized employment.

Action Steps:

- Determine incentive amounts and outreach to local community organizations such as the Proyecto Mixteco Advocacy Group to provide translators who can assist in creating a client incentive flyer in English, Spanish, as well as Mixteco to describe the programs and how to receive the incentive.
- Develop a "How to Navigate WTW" flyer, which will define assigned Eligibility and Employment Services workers to include change reporting, program assistance, and incentives available.
- Simplify verbiage contained in documents and during participant interactions. This will provide a better understanding of the process, purpose, and regulations while facilitating open communication.
- Initial outreach to include calls to participants for introduction as well as an introduction letter containing business card and promotional flyers. If initial outreach is unsuccessful, a home visit will then be conducted. Create a folder to be provided to participants; to include a planner, goals document with open ended questions, note section, and a community resource list. Create magnet cards with contact information to be placed where easily accessible.
- In order to maintain staff engagement, rotate the following amongst employment services staff.
- Utilizing technology to create and distribute a "Topic of the Month" flyer and/or Quarterly WTW Newsletter for participants who opt in during the ORE process, providing information on resources, program updates, changes, incentives, benefits, etc.

Strategy 2: Increase training opportunities for DSS staff that will include strategies on how to best communicate to clients the available services and courses provided at local educational institutions, as well as through our internal DSS Job Services unit.

Action Steps:

- Explore increased use of emails for communicating with clients.
- Offer participants real life engagement, such as providing the opportunity to visit and familiarize themselves with local community colleges or adult education centers which in turn can lead to the decision of enrollment.
- Department Business Specialist (DBS) Staff to set up a workgroup with community colleges and adult education sites; For Santa Barbara increasing communication/partnership strategies with SBCC/UCSB, for Santa Maria/Lompoc increasing communication/partnership strategies with Allan Hancock and Lompoc Adult Education
- Employment Services staff to create a workgroup regarding learning about the WTW participant's experience in Job Services, including attending orientation, job club, etc. to gain a better understanding of the process and information received, in order to better inform participants of the process and also become aware of the information provided to participants during activities.
- Offer participants real life engagement opportunities to include "field trips", such as providing the opportunity to visit and familiarize themselves with local community colleges or adult education centers which in turn can lead to the decision of enrollment.

Strategy 3: Introduce and promote CalWORKs 2.0 philosophies amongst staff and clients.

Action Steps:

- Conduct training for staff in regards to the CalWORKs 2.0 model and purpose.
- Employment services staff to obtain "how to" training for or workshops on how to engage participants, motivational interviewing training, effective case management and other trainings, in order to fully understand the role of CES as case manager rather than social worker.
- Provide participants awareness regarding CalWORKs 2.0 model/purpose and the CalWORKs 2.0 goals GPDRR Goal Plan Do Review Revise and Goals Road Map approaches. By encouraging goals, CES staff will empower participants to develop and work towards successfully reaching their goals and increasing engagement.

Strategy 4: Increase the number of available supportive services vendors with a focus on clothing and transportation as identified by partners and create increased flexibility/options in regards to activities and supportive services issuances.

Action Steps:

- Actively seek out new vendors in the community to provide additional clothing and transportation supportive services.
- Create standard advancement amounts for bus passes, clothing and assess each client on a case-by-case basis in order to determine the need level from low to high.
- Provide guidance to Employment Services staff on flexibility options on how to increase the supportive services thresholds when needed.
- Develop an ongoing focus group to include CES staff and participants in different stages of the WTW program where we offer breakfast, lunch, and other incentives for participation in order to continue to check in on what is needed, what works, what is lacking supportive service wise.
- Utilize Job Services staff in order to promote and provide referrals in regards to supportive services, including the issuing of supportive services such as mileage, clothing, bus passes, document printing, etc. when necessary.

Strategy 5: Increase training for staff and supervisors in regard to engagement rates, in order to assist in the timeliness of CalSAWS entries and the monitoring of caseloads on a monthly basis. This will ensure the workload is being monitored to ensure productivity is measured more accurately.

Action Steps:

- Designate a Job Services worker to case manage JRS Job Retention Services cases to streamline the process.
- Department Business Specialist (DBS) staff to conduct semi-annual CES meetings to include all offices. This will allow for team building and collaboration between CES staff, including the sharing of best practices, feedback, training for partner agencies, and exploring additional ways to deliver services where they are at.
- Utilize a CES staff created newsletter or Did You Know document to increase awareness and understanding of all program components, updates, changes, and CES duties.
- Utilize employment services staff created workshops and trainings, as well as incentivized grass root trainings for clients available in multiple languages. Topics will include development of executive functioning skills, budgeting, and parenting in order to support the Linkages 2.0 prevention of child abuse initiative.

- Emphasize job shadowing in order to gain an understanding of Employment Services/Job Services staff job functions. This in turn, will open the lines of communication and provide all around better service to participants during the monthly contacts.

Tracking Improvement:

Partners, staff, and stakeholder collaborators will be asked to provide direct feedback for targeted improvements, such as the review of and improvements to the translation of the CalWORKs forms for non-English speakers in terms of expanded clothing and transportation options.

We will collect and analyze ongoing data on clients and input from partners to explore educational workshop opportunities for clients.

The County of Santa Barbara Cal-OAR team will continuously evaluate each action step taken to see if improvement is being achieved utilizing staff meetings, CalSAWS reports, Cal-OAR data reports, Ad Hoc reports, as well as supervisory reviews.

The responsibility to oversee and monitor progress on our goals will be that of the Cal-OAR Department Business Specialist (DBS) staff, the sponsor manager, and the Cal-OAR team. This information will then be reported to district office managers and supervisors and if necessary, corrective action plans will be instituted to ensure continuous process improvement.

DBS staff will ensure that Cal-OAR and Cal-SIP strategies are a standing item in each CalWORKs/Welfare-To-Work team meeting, as well as ensuring that the Cal-OAR team is meeting at a minimum every other month to review the available reports and data to track progress to ensure compliance and the meeting of set goals and percentages performance measures.

The impact to the improvement strategies will be closely monitored over a 24-month period following final submission of the Cal-SIP report and will follow the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle, where evaluation of program pivots will lead to new strategies to improve outcomes for the CalWORKs families the County serves.