



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## AGENDA ITEM

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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**DATE:** December 10, 2024

# 16

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

### **SUBJECT**

**APPROVE THE CALIFORNIA WORK OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO KIDS OUTCOMES AND ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

### **OVERVIEW**

Title 42, Chapter 7, Subchapter IV, Part A of the United States Code establishes the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families entitlement program known in California as the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program. California Department of Social Services (CDSS) provides oversight of the CalWORKs program, and all 58 counties administer the program on behalf of the State, within their respective jurisdictions. CalWORKs provides a wide range of services to some of the most vulnerable families living on lower incomes in San Diego County. In addition to providing essential cash, nutrition and medical benefits to families, CalWORKs also incorporates a Welfare to Work (WTW) (also known as Employment Services (ES)) component that provides additional supportive services including childcare, transportation, and housing services as required by the California Welfare and Institutions Code Section 11523. The purpose of participating in WTW activities is for families to gain the proper support, resources, job skills, training, and education to obtain full-time employment that leads to self-sufficiency.

As a proactive measure, the State Legislature established the CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review system (Cal-OAR) in 2017, to identify an improved, more comprehensive approach to measuring outcomes and successes of the CalWORKs program. The Cal-OAR initiative was established to facilitate a local accountability system that fosters continuous quality improvement. Cal-OAR requires monitoring and reporting of specific data measures, including supportive service utilization and post-aid metrics, to determine the effectiveness of the various WTW activities in which participants engage.

The Cal-OAR consists of three main components: performance indicators, San Diego County's CalWORKs self-assessment process, and a county's CalWORKs system improvement plan. Through the State required Cal-OAR process, all California counties completed a CalWORKs self-assessment, including recipient and community feedback, and developed an improvement plan that focuses on improving performance indicators. Once the improvement plan is developed, each county is required to implement and evaluate strategies for the performance indicators identified. A progress report is then created to help inform updates to the selected performance indicators and

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measures. In April 2023, the County of San Diego completed a self-assessment that was approved by CDSS. Subsequently, the County developed the improvement plan which was pre-approved by CDSS in September 2023.

Today's action requests the San Diego County Board of Supervisors approve the County of San Diego California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) System Improvement Plan and authorize the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors to sign the CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review Report Signature Sheet and execute any amendments thereto that do not materially impact or alter its substance.

**RECOMMENDATION  
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

Approve the County of San Diego California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) System Improvement Plan (San Diego County Cal-SIP Plan) and authorize the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors to sign the CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review (Cal-OAR) Report Signature Sheet and execute any amendments thereto that do not materially impact or alter its substance.

**EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Outcomes and Accountability Review system initiative will help make a positive impact on equity by encouraging and stimulating economic opportunities for the neediest families in San Diego County. From 2018 to 2022, 5.4% of San Diego County CalWORKs recipients fell below the 50% threshold of the ratio of income to poverty level as based on the American Community Survey 5-year estimate. Race and ethnicity data, as gathered by the California Department of Social Services in 2022, indicates that San Diego County CalWORKs caseloads consisted of 2.7% Asian, 14.8% Black, 34.2% Hispanic or Latino, 48% white and 0.4% other. The CalWORKs program is designed to remove barriers to expanding opportunities in traditionally underserved communities especially residents living on lower incomes. The job skills, training, and job placements gained through the Welfare to Work program can help advance opportunities for economic growth and lead residents to self-sufficiency while also stimulating the local economy which benefits the community.

**SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Outcomes and Accountability Review initiative helps support the County of San Diego (County) Sustainability Goal #4, to protect the health and well-being of everyone in the region in terms of Health and Well-being and Economy by providing programs, services, and resources to the County's most vulnerable residents experiencing deep poverty. Obtaining self-sufficiency through proper job training and education helps advance the economic impact throughout San Diego County, by aligning available resources with essential services that maintain fiscal stability and ensure longevity. During the CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review self-assessment process, in alignment with the County of San Diego's Sustainability Goal #1 to engage the community and obtain stakeholder feedback, input was gathered from recipients and community members. In addition, in alignment with the County's Sustainability Goal #2, to provide just and equitable

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access to County services, the CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review system initiative facilitates the creation of policies to reduce and eliminate poverty and promote economic sustainability for all County residents.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this recommendation. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

**BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

N/A

**ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

This item was presented and approved by the Social Services Advisory Board at its regular meeting on November 13, 2024.

**BACKGROUND**

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, a federal law also referred to as Welfare Reform, replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. The federal government provides block grants to each state to operate their own TANF programs. States are each responsible for administering the program, including determining eligibility for cash benefits and services. The County of San Diego (County) administers the TANF program as the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program on behalf of the State.

CalWORKs was created in 1996 to provide equitable access to the services, resources and opportunities families need to increase resilience, achieve economic mobility, break the cycle of poverty, and become self-sufficient. CalWORKs provides cash aid, employment services and childcare to eligible families with minor children. The program is designed to assist families living on lower incomes with meeting their basic needs as they move towards self-sufficiency through employment. In San Diego County, the CalWORKs program assisted over 50,000 residents in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-24.

Unless exempt, parents participating in CalWORKs are required to participate in Employment Services (ES) activities such as job training and education. ES, also known as Welfare to Work case management, is the employment and training component of the CalWORKs program. ES provides families with multiple avenues to obtain opportunities to move toward self-sufficiency. In San Diego County, the ES program assisted over 13,000 parents in FY 2023-24.

Senate Bill 89 (2017) added Welfare and Institutions Code Section 11523 to codify California's new CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review system (Cal-OAR) initiative. This initiative institutes a local data driven program management system that facilitates continuous improvement of the CalWORKs program by collecting, analyzing, and disseminating outcomes and best practices regarding specified performance measures. To develop the Cal-OAR principles, California Department of Social Services (CDSS) convened statewide workgroups comprised of various stakeholders, including current and former CalWORKs recipients, representatives from

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county human service agencies, and statewide advocates. The Cal-OAR workgroups developed recommendations for the Cal-OAR components, measures, and the work plan to be implemented on July 1, 2021, and will continue through June 30, 2026.

Cal-OAR is comprised of six components:

- Gather Performance Measures Data;
- Complete a CalWORKs County Self-Assessment (Cal-CSA);
- Plan for the System Improvement Plan;
- Create the CalWORKs System Improvement Plan (Cal-SIP);
- Implement and evaluate Cal-SIP strategies; and
- Provide County progress reports to CDSS.

The Cal-OAR components reflect the CalWORKs Continuous Quality Improvement (Cal-CQI) process of planning, analysis, implementation and evaluation. Cal-CQI includes an in-depth self-assessment of the CalWORKs program, development of a plan to improve the County CalWORKs program, implementation of the improvement plan, and progress updates. Each component is a multi-step process that includes certain reporting requirements. One requirement of Cal-OAR is to include process and outcome performance measures within specified categories developed by CDSS, in consultation with the Cal-OAR workgroup.

There are a total of 26 Cal-OAR Performance Measures that provide counties with a data-driven, comprehensive view of their CalWORKs program's outcomes to enable in-depth analyses and strategic planning for program improvement.

During the first cycle of Cal-OAR, six performance measures will be reviewed:

- Initial Engagement;
- Ongoing Engagement;
- Supportive Services;
- Education;
- Employment and Wages; and
- Exits and Re-entries.

The Cal-OAR performance measures align with the CalWORKs logic model and emphasize CalWORKs ES activities that lead to meaningful participant progress toward key outcomes, including participant engagement, supportive services, and program exits and reentries. Data for Cal-OAR Performance Measures are pulled from various systems by CDSS, reported to counties monthly, then added to an Online Cal-OAR Data Dashboard.

The Cal-CSA outlines the areas of improvement the County would like to focus on in their system improvement plan. To develop the Cal-CSA, the County reviewed Performance Measure data and utilized survey results from CalWORKs recipients and community members, reported in the County Access and Enrollment Assessment Report. The County is required to develop a Cal-SIP in consultation with a peer county. The Cal-SIP identifies focus areas based on the Cal-CSA and describes how the County intends to improve its ES program outcomes in specified areas. Planning efforts for the Cal-SIP entail inclusion of the Cal-CSA data gathering, community presentations

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and solicitation of feedback, and a peer review process that focuses on the County's selected areas for improvement and provides additional insight and technical assistance. During the peer review process, the County partnered with a peer county to review the Cal-CSA reports and form strategies for improvement in the identified Cal-SIP focus area.

The County selected the following Performance Measures to focus on the CalSIP:

- Increase the attendance rate for the first ES activity;
- Decrease the rate of program reentries of ES participants;
- Equity goal requirement; and
- Implement a warm handoff process to ES staff to engage non-responsive customers.

Cal-OAR also requires the County to provide annual progress reports to CDSS. The County will complete annual progress reports regarding the status of their Cal-SIP, which includes a continuation of the peer review process and completion of reports on the outcomes of the Cal-SIP. The Cal-SIP progress report will describe the results of the improvement strategy implementation by sharing progress, successes, barriers, challenges, and adjustments to the improvement strategies.


Today's action requests the San Diego County Board of Supervisors approve the County of San Diego CalWORKs System Improvement Plan and authorize the Clerk of the Board to sign the CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review (Cal-OAR) Report Signature Sheet and execute any amendments thereto that do not materially impact or alter its substance.

**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

The Cal-OAR initiative helps support the Community (Quality of Life) and Economy (Economic Opportunity) initiatives in the County 2024-2029 Strategic Plan as well as the County of San Diego *Live Well San Diego* vision by empowering the local workforce and aiming to improve quality of life for the region's most vulnerable families. By investing in our local workforce and providing supportive services, the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids and Welfare to Work programs help empower residents to achieve gainful employment that leads to self-sufficiency. Quality of life can be improved for residents through these programs by providing services that enhance the community through increasing the well-being of our residents including supporting adequate childcare, transportation, nutrition, and housing assistance.

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Respectfully submitted,



FOR

EBONY N. SHELTON  
Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

Attachment A - Cal-OAR Cal-SIP Report  
Appendix A - Cal-OAR Report Signature Sheet