

CalWORKs County Self-Assessment (Cal-CSA) Report

County: Orange

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Introduction

The Cal-OAR's goal is to establish a local, data-driven program management system that facilitates continuous improvement of county CalWORKs programs by collecting, analyzing, and disseminating outcomes and best practices. Cal-OAR encourages intentionality in county CalWORKs program design, service delivery models, and activity structure. This provides opportunities for adults to build core capabilities critical to manage adversity, succeed in navigating a long-term career trajectory, and balance the challenges of life, family, and work. Through collaboration and partnership, counties and the state will execute a joint vision for CalWORKs outcomes of interest that propel improvement of county CalWORKs programs.

The first component of the Cal-OAR process is the CalWORKs County Self-Assessment (Cal-CSA), which organizes the performance measures into groups of related measures to support a holistic assessment of the CWD's CalWORKs program.

1. Describe how the CWD approached the Cal-CSA report.

The County of Orange Social Services Agency (Agency) created a Cal-OAR Team consisting of subject matter experts (SMEs) from within the Family Self-Sufficiency-Adult Services Division (FSS-AS). FSS-AS is one of four major divisions within the Agency and encompasses CalWORKs (CW), Welfare-to-Work (WTW), Foster Care, Adult Protective Services, and In-Home Supportive Services.

The Cal-OAR Team consisted of one (1) staff member in the Administrative Manager II (AMII) position, two (2) staff members in the Administrative Manager I (AMI) position, one (1) staff member in the Social Services Supervisor II (SSSII) position, two (2) staff members in the Social Services Supervisor I (SSSI) position, and one (1) staff member in the Staff Specialist position. The AMII has over 25 years of county experience including general county administration, budget, research, and 5 years leading CalWORKs and Welfare-to-Work administrative teams. One of the two managers retired as an AMII with over 30 years of invaluable CW/WTW experience and returned as an extra-help AMI to support Cal-OAR. The second manager served as the Cal-OAR lead and project manager and brought a broad understanding of county government and project management experience. The SSSII has over 16 years of experience in CW/WTW supporting Homeless Assistance, the Housing Support Program, the Home Visiting Program, Family Stabilization, Child Care, Transportation, Ancillary, WTW, and Educational Activities. One SSSI is a former case manager and Employment & Eligibility Specialist with over 7 years of experience with CW/WTW and another 6 years serving the

Agency assisting Medi-Cal and CalFresh clients. The second SSSI has a strong research background and over 6 years of Agency experience.

The Cal-OAR Team coordinated and wrote the Cal-CSA report with support from the Agency's Research Team to compile and validate data from various sources, including CalWIN. Additionally, the Research Team sent two representatives to the monthly Cal-OAR Project Action Team (PAT) meetings to collaborate with other CalWIN counties and data leads to help ensure the integrity of the Agency's data.

The Cal-OAR Team received guidance from senior leadership and worked with former and current SMEs to answer every question in detail. The Cal-OAR Team verified that policies and procedures were consistent with program expectations and noted any concerns or issues as opportunities for future evaluation.

The Cal-OAR Team collaborated with Agency staff which included caseworkers, supervisors, and administrators, as well as Agency partners such as contracted case managers, contracted job services provider, and community college representatives. Engaging current and former clients is an ongoing priority and effort which the team is working on establishing. For this assessment, the Cal-OAR Team utilized data from five (5) months of the Client Satisfaction Survey (July – November 2022), which included 75 responses.

For the CalWORKs System Improvement Plan (Cal-SIP), the Cal-OAR Team will aim to establish small cohorts of current and former clients to better understand CW/WTW barriers and challenges from their perspective.

2. Methods used to gather partner and collaborator feedback.

A key priority for the Cal-OAR Team was to ensure a thoughtful community-focused approach while completing the Cal-CSA and throughout the continuous quality improvement process. The Cal-OAR Team obtained feedback from a variety of partners and collaborators to help ensure that multiple perspectives were included.

One of the methods used to gather partner and collaborator feedback was to establish focus groups. The Cal-OAR Team established and met with five focus groups: (1) educational partners, (2) specialized services providers, (3) caseworkers (including Employment & Eligibility Specialists and Case Managers), (4) EQUUS Workforce Solutions (contracted employment activities provider), and (5) CW/WTW Administrators. The Cal-OAR Team conducted meetings virtually. At each focus group meeting, facilitators presented an overview of the Cal-OAR process and shared performance measure data analyses. Following the presentation, partners and collaborators worked in

small groups of six (6) to eight (8) members to discuss strengths and challenges of various aspects of the CalWORKs program and completed root cause analyses.

The Cal-OAR Team supported the effort to gather feedback from clients by promoting the Client Satisfaction Survey (CSS) created by CDSS. Flyers promoting the survey were distributed to clients to promote the completion of the survey as well as messaging to caseworkers to help explain the purpose of the CSS and how to complete it. Additionally, the team plans on reaching out to clients who have selected that they wish to be contacted regarding the survey to continue engagement through focus groups and surveys.

The Cal-OAR Team also facilitated internal virtual meetings with CW/WTW SMEs, administrators, and various levels of CalWORKs staff to gather feedback and insight. The feedback provided by various partners and collaborators was used to inform the Cal-CSA process and provide insight into ways in which the Agency can incorporate suggestions and start planning for the Cal-SIP.

The Cal-OAR Team was pleased to learn that most partners and collaborators were willing and excited to participate in discussions surrounding various areas of the CW/WTW program, barrier removal services, drivers of success, and pain points within the program. A few takeaways from this process include:

- When first engaging with stakeholders, it is beneficial to provide education regarding Cal-OAR, the Cal-OAR continuous quality improvement (CQI) process, how performance measures are determined, and how to interpret performance measures. While Cal-OAR is a data-driven process, CW/WTW is multi-dimensional and requires a thorough and thoughtful understanding of how services are delivered to vulnerable families and whether or not families are ready to receive them.
- Focus group participants enjoyed being consulted for potential program improvements and opportunities in service delivery and are looking forward to seeing new implementations related to their feedback.

Demographics

1. Describe the strengths and needs of the communities served.

Orange County has a very diverse and educated population. This strength in diversity and education contributes to the county's strong workforce, economy, and tourism. Additionally, Orange County is located in Southern California adjacent to Los Angeles and in close proximity to San Diego which are major population, employment, and economic centers as well.

According to data available on the CDSS Cal-OAR Dashboard, 26.4% of Orange County residents have a bachelor's degree compared to the 21.6% rate in California; 14.9% of Orange County residents have a graduate degree compared to the 13.1% rate in California.

Orange County has a lower rate of unemployment than California and surrounding counties. Unemployment rates in Orange County were 2.8% (2019) and 6.0% (2021), compared to California's 5.2% (2019) and 7.3% (2021) (Figure 1: Average Unemployment Rate). Moreover, Orange County's Race and Ethnicity breakdown for Asian populations is 20.3% (6% higher than CA) while the Latino population is 34.1% (4.9% lower than CA) (Figure 2: Race and Ethnicity Data).

Figure 1: Average Unemployment Rate

<u>County</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
California	5.2%	10.1%	7.3%
Orange	2.8%	9.1%	6.0%
Riverside	4.3%	10.2%	7.4%
San Bernardino	3.9%	9.7%	7.4%
San Diego	3.3%	9.5%	6.5%

Description: This table summarizes the unemployment rate in Orange County for the years 2019 through 2021. For comparison, the unemployment rates for Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties (and California as a whole) were included.

Source: ¹ [CDSS Cal-OAR Data Dashboard](#) (County Demographic Profile tab, Average Unemployment & Unemployment Rate Sub-Section)

Reference on the CalWORKs County Self-Assessment (Cal-CSA): Background Question 1

Figure 2: Race and Ethnicity Data

County	Asian 2019	Asian 2020	Black 2019	Black 2020	Hispanic or Latino 2019	Hispanic or Latino 2020	Other 2019	Other 2020	White 2019	White 2020
California	14.3%	14.6%	5.5%	5.4%	39.0%	39.1%	4.0%	4.4%	37.2%	36.5%
Orange	20.3%	20.9%	1.6%	1.6%	34.1%	33.8%	3.4%	4.0%	40.6%	39.8%
Riverside	6.3%	6.5%	6.1%	6.1%	48.9%	49.4%	3.3%	3.6%	35.3%	34.4%
San Bernardino	7.0%	7.2%	7.9%	7.7%	53.3%	53.8%	3.3%	3.8%	28.5%	27.6%
San Diego	11.6%	11.7%	4.7%	4.6%	33.7%	33.9%	4.4%	4.9%	45.6%	44.9%

Description: This table summarizes race and ethnicity data for Orange County for the years 2015 – 2019 (listed as 2019) and 2016 – 2020 (listed as 2020). For comparison, race and ethnicity data for Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties (and California as a whole) were included.

Source: ¹ [U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates \(2019 and 2020\), Table DP05](#)

References on the Cal-CSA: Background Questions 1 and 2

The Race and Ethnicity breakdown is significant because further analysis and understanding of the region will show that the Asian ethnicity category is not dominated by a single group but rather multiple communities. Orange County has concentrated populations in multiple regions of the county. Vietnamese residents are heavily concentrated in the western cities, Korean residents are concentrated in the northern cities, and Chinese residents in the southern part of the county. Additionally, it is important to note that the White demographic breakdown is inclusive of Arabic and Farsi speaking populations. Orange County has concentrated Arabic speaking populations in the central/northern portion of the county and the Farsi speaking population is the 3rd largest non-English language for our clients.

While Orange County enjoys a strong labor market, diversity, and a highly desirable climate, these same reasons create high costs of living.

Low income and affordable housing options in Orange County are scarce. According to the OC Community Indicators Report 2021-22, the “housing wage” or minimum wage a worker would need to earn to afford renting a median-priced, one-bedroom apartment increased to \$36.31 an hour or \$75,529 per year. A minimum wage worker would need to work 104 hours a week to afford a one-bedroom apartment, 128 hours a week to afford two bedrooms, and 177 hours per week to afford three bedrooms (Figure 3: Orange County’s Monthly Cost of Rent).

Figure 3: Orange County's Monthly Cost of Rent

AFFORDING MEDIAN RENT REQUIRES 104 MINIMUM WAGE WORK HOURS

RENTAL MARKET AFFORDABILITY IN ORANGE COUNTY, 2017–2021

FAIR MARKET RENT (MONTHLY)	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
One Bedroom	\$1,436	\$1,493	\$1,632	\$1,785	\$1,888
Two Bedroom	\$1,813	\$1,876	\$2,037	\$2,216	\$2,331
Three Bedroom	\$2,531	\$2,626	\$2,862	\$3,098	\$3,227
Amount a Household with One Minimum Wage Earner Can Afford to Pay in Rent (Monthly)	\$546	\$572	\$624	\$676	\$728
Number of Hours per Week a Minimum Wage Earner Must Work to Afford a One-Bedroom Apartment	105	104	105	106	104

Sources: Community Indicators Report analysis of Fair Market Rent data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development using the methodology of the National Low Income Housing Coalition

Description: This table summarizes fair market rent prices for apartments in Orange County from 2017 and 2021 and the affordability of those apartments for minimum wage earners.

Source: ¹ [Orange County Community Indicators Report \(2021-2022\), page 95](#)

References on the Cal-CSA: Background Question 1, Section 8 Part 1 Question 4, Section 8 Part 5 Question 2

Another concern in Orange County is the aging population. The age trends and housing costs are also creating more multi-generational homes with multi-faceted needs for healthcare, child care, employment support, and behavioral health services.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median age in 2000 was 33.3; the median age rose by five (5) years to 38.3 in 2020. According to the most recent data from the California Department of Finance, residents aged 65 and over are the only age group expected to increase in proportion between 2020 and 2060 in Orange County. With only the oldest age group increasing, the old-age dependency ratio will increase, meaning fewer workers and students and more elderly dependents.

While tourism and the service industry play a major part in the economy, jobs created by tourism and service industries do not often translate to living wages in Orange County and are often filled by non-English speaking workers.

According to the 2019-2023 OC Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Report, increased diversity is impacting local schools that need to adequately plan or reinforce English language programs, limiting the educational attainment of English Language Learners.

Lastly, Orange County is a car-dependent location with limited public transportation options for individuals without a car. This creates further issues for commuting to employment, child care, education, and regular daily necessities such as groceries, healthcare, and pleasure.

2. How does the county demographic profile compare with CWD and statewide demographics?

Average Unemployment and Unemployment Rate: Based on data from the County Demographics Profile section of the CDSS Cal-OAR Dashboard, Unemployment Rates in Orange County were 2.8% (2019) and 6.0% (2021), compared to California's 5.2% (2019) and 7.3% (2021).

Educational Attainment and Median Earnings: Based on data from the CDSS Cal-OAR Dashboard (obtained from the 2016-2020 American Community Surveys (5-Year Estimates), median earnings of adults 25 years and older in Orange County and California increased as educational attainment increased (Figure 4: Median Earnings and Rate of Poverty in Relation to Level of Educational Attainment). The lowest educational attainment category (less than high school degree) had the lowest earnings (OC: \$25,941, CA: \$25,253) and the highest educational attainment category (graduate or professional degree) had the highest earnings (OC: \$93,165, CA: \$91,622).

Figure 4: Median Earnings and Rate of Poverty in Relation to Level of Educational Attainment

<u>Level of Educational Attainment</u>	<u>California 2020 Median Earnings</u>	<u>Orange County 2020 Median Earnings</u>	<u>California 2020 Rate of Poverty</u>	<u>Orange County 2020 Rate of Poverty</u>
Less than High School	\$25,253	\$25,941	20.8%	17.7%
High School Graduate (or equivalence)	\$32,560	\$33,726	13.4%	11.7%
Some College or Associate's Degree	\$40,683	\$43,086	9.4%	7.2%
Bachelor's Degree	\$64,554	\$67,002	4.8%	4.6%
Graduate or Professional Degree	\$91,622	\$93,165		

Description: This table summarizes 2020 median earnings and rates of poverty in California and Orange County (for the adult population 25 years of age and older) by highest level of educational attainment.

Sources: ¹ [U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1501 \(Orange County\)](#); ² [U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1501 \(California\)](#)
References on the Cal-CSA: Background Question 2, Section 8 Part 5 Question 3

In both Orange County and California, completing a bachelor's degree was the most common level of educational attainment (OC: 26.4%, CA: 21.6%). In California, 16.1% of adults 25 years and older had a high school education (no diploma) or less. In Orange County, 13.9% had a high school education (no diploma) or less.

In comparison, the most common levels of educational attainment for Orange County CalWORKs clients who completed an Appraisal in 2021 through the Online CalWORKs Appraisal Tool (OCAT) was graduating high school (45%) and having a high school education (no diploma) or less (20.9%), bringing the total percentage of Orange County CalWORKs clients with a high school diploma or less to 65.9% (Figure 5: Highest Level of Educational Attainment of County of Orange CalWORKs Clients).

Figure 5: Highest Level of Educational Attainment of County of Orange CalWORKs Clients

<u>Highest Level of Education Completed</u>	<u>Percentage of Total</u>
Less than High School Degree	20.9%
High School Graduates	45.0%
Some College or Vocational School	20.5%
Post College/Graduate School	2.6%
Data Unavailable	11.0%

Description: This table displays educational attainment information for County of Orange CalWORKs clients who were Welfare-to-Work participants and completed an Online CalWORKs Appraisal Tool (OCAT) appraisal between January 2021 to December 2021.

Source: ¹ OCAT Report: Clients by Educational Attainment

References on the Cal-CSA: Background Question 2, Background Question 3, Section 8 Part 5 Question 2

Household Income: According to the County Demographics Profile section of the CDSS Cal-OAR Dashboard, the median annual household income in Orange County in 2020 was \$94,441 compared to California at \$78,672 (Figure 6: Median Household Income by Year). While not a direct comparison to median annual household income, it is important to note that during FY 2019-20, 80.3% of Orange County CalWORKs cases containing work eligible adults earned under \$24,000 annually (Figure 7: Earnings Distribution for CalWORKs Cases with Work Eligible Adults).

Figure 6: Median Household Income by Year

County	2019	2020
California	\$75,235	\$78,672
Orange	\$90,234	\$94,441
Riverside	\$67,005	\$70,732
San Bernardino	\$63,362	\$65,761
San Diego	\$78,980	\$82,426

Description: This table summarizes median household income in Orange County for 2019 and 2020. For comparison, data for Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties (and California as a whole) were included.

Source: ¹ [CDSS Cal-OAR Data Dashboard](#) (County Demographic Profile tab, Household Income Sub-Section)

References on the Cal-CSA: Background Question 2, Section 8 Part 4 Question 3, Section 8 Part 5 Question 2

Figure 7: Earnings Distribution for CalWORKs Cases with Work Eligible Adults

	California FY 2018 - 2019	California FY 2019 - 2020	Orange County FY 2018 - 2019	Orange County FY 2019 - 2020	Riverside FY 2018 - 2019	Riverside FY 2019 - 2020	San Bernardino FY 2018 - 2019	San Bernardino FY 2019 - 2020	San Diego FY 2018 - 2019	San Diego FY 2019 - 2020
No income reported	61.8%	50.3%	62.3%	48.0%	62.2%	49.4%	61.3%	48.1%	62.3%	50.6%
\$1 to \$1000	62.4%	56.6%	58.5%	53.3%	65.4%	59.3%	64.1%	58.5%	62.1%	56.2%
\$1001 to \$1600	18.4%	18.1%	19.17%	17.8%	18.5%	17.8%	17.2%	17.4%	20.4%	19.9%
\$1,601 to \$2000	7.4%	8.4%	7.1%	9.2%	6.3%	8.6%	7.4%	7.9%	7.3%	8.6%
\$2001 to \$2600	5.9%	7.8%	6.9%	8.7%	4.9%	6.9%	5.9%	7.5%	5.5%	7.1%
More than \$2601	5.9%	9.1%	8.3%	11.0%	4.9%	7.4%	5.4%	8.7%	4.7%	8.2%

Description: This table summarizes earnings distribution for CalWORKs cases with work eligible adults in Orange County for fiscal year (FY) 2018 to 2019 and FY 2019 to 2020. For comparison, data for Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties (and California as a whole) were included.

Source: ¹ [CDSS Cal-OAR Data Dashboard](#) (County Demographic Profile tab, Household Income Sub-Section)

Reference on the Cal-CSA: Background Question 2

Poverty and Deep Poverty Rates: According to the American Community Survey 5-Year (2016-2020) Estimates, Orange County's rate of deep poverty (below 50% of poverty threshold) was 4.78% compared to California's rate of 5.63%. Orange County's rate of

poverty (below 100% of poverty threshold) was 10.14% compared to California's rate of 12.58% (Figure 8: Poverty and Deep Poverty Rates).

Figure 8: Poverty and Deep Poverty Rates

<u>Poverty Level</u>	<u>Orange County</u>	<u>California</u>
Below 50% (Deep Poverty)	4.78%	5.63%
Below 100%	10.14%	12.58%
Below 125%	13.49%	16.78%

Description: This table summarizes poverty and deep poverty rates in Orange County and California from 2016 to 2020.

Sources: ¹ [U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table C17002 \(Orange County\)](#); ² [U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table C17002 \(California\)](#)

Reference on the Cal-CSA: Background Question 2

Child Poverty Rates: According to the American Community Survey 5-Year (2016-2020) Estimates, Orange County's rates of child poverty for children under 18 years old was 12.9% compared to California's rate of 16.8% (Figure 9: Child Poverty Rates).

Figure 9: Child Poverty Rates

<u>Age</u>	<u>Orange County</u>	<u>California</u>
Under 5 Years	12.7%	17.0%
5-17 Years	13.0%	16.7%
Under 18 Years	12.9%	16.8%

Description: This table summarizes child poverty rates in Orange County and California from 2016 to 2020.

Sources: ¹ [U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1701 \(Orange County\)](#); ² [U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1701 \(California\)](#)

Reference on the Cal-CSA: Background Question 2

Race and Ethnicity: Findings from the American Community Survey 5-Year (2015-2019) Estimates show that the largest population in Orange County was White (40.6%) followed by Hispanic/Latino (34.1%). The largest population in California was Hispanic/Latino (39.0%) followed by White (37.2%). The two races with the biggest difference in population between Orange County and California were Asian (6.0% more in Orange County than California) and Hispanic/Latino (4.9% less in Orange County than California) (Figure 2: Race and Ethnicity Data, page 8 of this document). According to U.S. Census Bureau data, the percentage of Asian population as a total of the Orange County population grew by 3.9%, or 154,203, between 2010 and 2020.

When comparing overall Orange County race and ethnicity data to the Orange County CalWORKs race and ethnicity data, the two races with the biggest difference in population were Hispanic/Latino (27.9% more in the Orange County CalWORKs population than the general Orange County population) and Asian (15.6% less in the Orange County CalWORKs population than the general Orange County population).

HUD Homeless Population Estimates: According to the County Demographics Profile section of the CDSS Cal-OAR Dashboard, the Orange County Continuum of Care's total number of homeless people in 2020 was 6,978 compared to California's total of 161,548. When comparing these numbers to the total populations in Orange County (3,167,809) and California (39,029,342), Orange County Continuum of Care's percentage of homeless people in 2020 was 0.22% compared to California's percentage of 0.41%.

Average Rent: According to the County Demographics Profile section of the CDSS Cal-OAR Dashboard, the average gross monthly rent in Orange County in 2020 was \$1,928 compared to \$1,586 in California. Rent was 35% or more of the household's income for 45.9% of households in Orange County and 44.7% of households in California. Conversely, rent was under 30% of a household's income for 44.1% of households in Orange County and 45.7% of households in California.

3. Describe the overall CWD demographic makeup, and how it impacts the ability of the CWD to provide services to the CalWORKs population.

Based on the Agency's summarized demographic data, 74.8% of the Agency's CalWORKs clients were children and 25.2% were adults. Adults who were 60 years of age and older represented 0.3% of the total CalWORKs population (Figure 10: County of Orange CalWORKs Clients by Age). For gender, 56% of the CalWORKs head of households were female and 44% were male (Figure 11: County of Orange CalWORKs Clients by Gender).

Figure 10: County of Orange CalWORKs Clients by Age

Age Category	CalWORKs Region											
	North		West		South		East		Foster Care (Mutual Clients)		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Children: 0-<6	2,237	21.0%	2,165	19.4%	628	20.4%	1,835	19.6%	156	29.2%	7,021	20.2%
Children: 6-<13	3,192	30.0%	3,324	29.8%	879	28.6%	2,991	32.0%	143	26.7%	10,529	30.3%
Children: 13-<18	2,399	22.6%	2,780	24.9%	647	21.1%	2,540	27.2%	76	14.2%	8,442	24.3%
Adults: 18+	2,801	26.4%	2,890	25.9%	917	29.9%	1,980	21.2%	160	29.9%	8,748	25.2%
Total	10,629	100.0%	11,159	100.0%	3,071	100.0%	9,346	100.0%	535	100.0%	34,740	100.0%

Description: This table summarizes the ages of active CalWORKs clients from January 2022 to June 2022.

Source: ¹ Agency Research Report

Reference on the Cal-CSA: Background Question 3

Figure 11: County of Orange CalWORKs Clients by Gender

Gender	CalWORKs Region											
	North		West		South		East		Foster Care (Mutual Clients)		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Female	6,024	56.7%	6,203	55.6%	1,742	56.7%	5,158	55.2%	313	58.5%	19,440	56.0%
Male	4,605	43.3%	4,956	44.4%	1,329	43.3%	4,188	44.8%	222	41.5%	15,300	44.0%
Total	10,629	100.0%	11,159	100.0%	3,071	100.0%	9,346	100.0%	535	100.0%	34,740	100.0%

Description: This table summarizes the gender of active CalWORKs clients from January 2022 to June 2022.

Source: ¹ Agency Research Report

Reference on the Cal-CSA: Background Question 3

The largest three (3) ethnicities of the Agency's CalWORKs clients were Hispanic (57.4%), Other Ethnicity (16.8%), and Vietnamese (14.1%). Hispanic, Other Ethnicity, and Vietnamese make up 88.3% of CalWORKs clients. The remaining two ethnicities were White (6%) and Black (5.6%) (Figure 12: County of Orange CalWORKs Clients by Ethnicity).

Figure 12: County of Orange CalWORKs Clients by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	CalWORKs Region											
	North		West		South		East		Foster Care (Mutual Clients)		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Black	640	6.0%	652	5.8%	333	10.8%	291	3.1%	*	6.4%	*	*
Hispanic	6,303	59.3%	5,501	49.3%	1,058	34.5%	6,778	72.5%	*	54.8%	*	*
Vietnamese	72	0.7%	2,278	20.4%	941	30.6%	1,536	16.4%	*	16.4%	*	*
White	1,241	11.7%	740	6.6%	23	0.7%	91	1.0%	*	0.6%	*	*
Other Ethnicity	2,373	22.3%	1,988	17.8%	716	23.3%	650	7.0%	*	21.9%	*	*
Total	10,629	100.0%	11,159	100.0%	3,071	100.0%	9,346	100%	*	100.0%	*	*

Description: This table summarizes the ethnicity of active CalWORKs clients from January to June 2022. Data marked with an asterisk (*) has been de-identified to protect client confidentiality.

Source: ¹ Agency Research Report

References on the Cal-CSA: Background Questions 3 and 5

The top three (3) languages were English (69.2%), Spanish (26.5%), and “Other” (2%). These are followed by Vietnamese (1.5%) and Arabic (0.9%). Additionally, it is important to note the prevalence of Korean, Chinese, and Farsi languages in Orange County.

Four of the Agency’s five (5) CalWORKs offices are located in urban areas, with the South office considered suburban.

For the Orange County Adult CalWORKs population that completed an OCAT Appraisal in 2021, the highest levels of education completed (Figure 5: Highest Level of Educational Attainment of County of Orange CalWORKs Clients, page 10 of this document) were as follows:

- Less than High School Degree (20.9%)
- High School Graduates (45.0%)
- Some College or Vocational School (20.5%)
- Post College/Graduate School (2.6%)
- Data Unavailable (11.0%)

The race most likely to be in poverty in Orange County was Hispanic, with 13.51% below the poverty level. The impact of housing on poverty in Orange County also creates a considerable challenge for many families who are served by the Agency. This challenge impacts the non-citizen population the most as immigrants who do not have legal status do not qualify for government assistance and struggle to obtain living wage jobs and afford housing in Orange County.

Orange County is car centric. Southern Orange County, which is more suburban than the rest of the county, has significant access issues as there is no public transportation in some remote areas, which creates a barrier for clients residing in those areas to attend appointments and interviews. The Agency provides various transportation service options for clients to attend appointments, take children to daycare, and commute to school or work. All Agency CW/WTW offices have contracted service providers co-located to make it easier for clients as they have all the services in one location, reducing the need for transportation.

Additionally, feedback from our partners and collaborators highlighted that clients often lack digital literacy, which restricts their capabilities for remote appointments, online application/SAR 7 completion, and online verification submission. Some parts of Orange County have internet connectivity issues that hamper administering some programs, especially online classes and job search. Agency CW/WTW offices provide resource centers to assist clients with these issues.

4. Describe any challenges or opportunities these findings present for the CWD and how this information aids in the identification of Cal-SIP strategies.

The Agency is exploring strategies to support educational attainment, wage progression, housing support, equal access to services/resources, English language learning, and additional services to non-WTW members of the CalWORKs family.

Orange County residents have a higher education attainment level than the California average. Most jobs paying living wages require at least a high school diploma or GED, resulting in many CalWORKs clients ending up with minimum wage jobs or working for a temporary job-placement agency. Additionally, for non-proficient English-speaking clients, the number of viable jobs is even smaller. Orange County has one of the highest costs of living and rent prices in California, making the situation more complicated for the Orange County CalWORKs population to sustain stable housing and increase self-sufficiency.

5. Provide an analysis of the variation in demographics and service delivery by region, if applicable, and how the CWD may target service delivery based on this information.

The five largest ethnic groups in the Orange County CalWORKs population are Hispanic (57.4%), Vietnamese (14.1%), White (6%), Black (5.6%), and Other Ethnicity (16.8%) (Figure 12: County of Orange CalWORKs Clients by Ethnicity, page 14 of this document).

- The Hispanic population is most concentrated in the East and North regions, making up 72.5% and 59.3% of clients served, respectively.
- The Vietnamese population is higher in the South and West regions, making up 30.6% and 20.4% of clients served, respectively.
- The White population is higher in the North and West regions, making up 11.7% and 6.6% of clients served, while only 1% of clients identify as White in the East region.
- The Black population is slightly higher in the South region, making up a total 10.8% of clients served.

In over 55% of the Orange County CalWORKs households, the head of household is female.

Over 69% of the Orange County CalWORKs population speaks English, except for the East Region, where 41.8% of clients served are Spanish speaking.

There are bilingual staff at every region covering the Spanish, Vietnamese, Arabic, and Farsi languages (Figure 13: Family Self-Sufficiency Staff Bilingual Languages by Classification). Additional languages can be supported through a contracted language line and/or County volunteered bilingual staff. Currently, there are:

- 61 Spanish bilingual and 9 Vietnamese bilingual staff at our East region (Santa Ana)
- 49 Spanish bilingual, 5 Vietnamese bilingual, and 5 Arabic bilingual staff at our North region (Anaheim)
- 24 Spanish bilingual and 15 Vietnamese bilingual staff at our West region (Cypress)
- 4 Spanish bilingual staff at our Foster Care - Mutual Client (FCRC - Mutual Client)
- 16 Spanish bilingual and 9 Farsi bilingual staff at our South region (Laguna Hills)

Figure 13: Family Self-Sufficiency Staff Bilingual Languages by Classification

<u>Classification</u>	<u>Arabic</u>	<u>Farsi</u>	<u>Romanian</u>	<u>Spanish</u>	<u>Vietnamese</u>	<u>Total by Classification</u>
Data Entry Technician				4	3	7
Eligibility Technician		2		36	3	41
Employment Eligibility Specialist			1	52	9	62
Eligibility Supervisor				5	1	6
Office Supervisor				4		4
Office Technician	1	3		27	3	34
Secretary				3		3
Social Worker II				15	8	23
Senior Social Worker				9		9
Social Services Supervisor I				18	2	20
Social Services Supervisor II				1	1	2
Total by Language	1	5	1	174	30	211
Percentage of Total	0.5%	2.4%	0.5%	82.5%	14.2%	100%

Description: This table summarizes the number of the Agency's Family Self Sufficiency staff (not including contracted staff) by position classification who have been certified bilingual in the five languages listed.

Source: ¹ Agency Staffing Report

Reference on the Cal-CSA: Background Question 5

Focus groups and stakeholders alike did not observe any service delivery variances in Orange County CW/WTW offices. Understanding that tailored services may be beneficial to Orange County's diverse populations, further review of data is needed to refine and identify the appropriate level of tailored services, if needed. One area to highlight for further research is the service delivery experience for Korean, Chinese, and Farsi

speaking clients who are not a majority demographic but are still prevalent in Orange County.

6. Identify emerging employment sectors within the county.

According to the OC Community Indicators Report 2021-22, the five (5) Orange County industry clusters with the most significant percentages of overall growth between 2011 and 2020 were Computer (43.4%), Construction (41.6%), Biomedical (28.7%), Health (22.5%), and Business and Professional Services (14.3%). This data supports the importance of increasing the technical skills of Orange County CalWORKs clients.

The report also indicated that between 2019 and 2020, four of the industries with the fastest growth in salary included Business and Professional Services (8.4%), Computer Software (7.7%), Computer Hardware (5.9%), and Communications (0.54%). All industry clusters have seen earnings improve since 2011, with the fastest growth taking place in Computer Software (37.7%) and Computer Hardware (36.9%).

7. Are there any significant changes or trends in the demographic profile since the submission of the last Cal-CSA, and how have those changes impacted the CWD's performance measures and service delivery?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

Section 1. Agency Characteristics

Part 1. Service Utilization and Access

1. Description of the CWD's overall structure, identifying where the CalWORKs program falls within that structure.

The Agency is led by a board-appointed Agency Director and is governed by the County Board of Supervisors. The Agency consists of four (4) separate divisions which include Administrative Services (Admin), Assistance Programs (AP), Children & Family Services (CFS), and Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services (FSS-AS).

In addition to the four divisions, the Executive Team is supported by Community & Government Relations, Community Engagement, and the Agency Medical Director. The leads from these groups report directly to the Agency Director, along with the Chief Deputy Director. The Chief Deputy Director assists the Agency Director with oversight of the four divisions and high-priority initiatives such as CalSAWS and agency-wide quality assurance.

The Admin Division includes Accounting, Contracts, Procurement, Research, Human Resources, Financial Services, Information Technology, Program Integrity, Facilities & Emergency Management Services, and Training & Career Development sections that support the remaining three divisions.

The AP Division is our largest division and is tasked with administering Medi-Cal, CalFresh, General Relief, and Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI).

The CFS Division includes all child welfare services: Adoptions, Placement Coordination, Emergency Response, Resource Family Approval, Intervention, Prevention Services, Child Abuse Registry, Child and Family Team, and the Agency's Emergency Shelter – Orangewood Children & Family Center.

The FSS-AS Division administers CalWORKs, Welfare-to-Work, Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), Public Assistance CalFresh, and Foster Care, along with the supportive and barrier removal services for CalWORKs families. Additionally, FSS-AS includes Adult Services which includes Adult Protective Services and In-Home Supportive Services. FSS-AS actively collaborates with other Agency divisions, contracted providers, other governmental agencies, and community-based organizations to enhance the delivery of services to help vulnerable families achieve self-sufficiency.

2. How has the CWD operationalized CalWORKs to meet the needs of the population served?

Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) encompasses CalWORKs/Welfare-to-Work (CW/WTW) and all the associated barrier removal and supportive services.

FSS employees collaborate with contracted service providers, other Agency divisions, and other governmental and community-based organizations to deliver CW/WTW services. Most adult CalWORKs recipients are eligible to participate in the Welfare-To-Work (WTW) Program, which provides a wide range of services designed to support families working toward the goal of self-sufficiency.

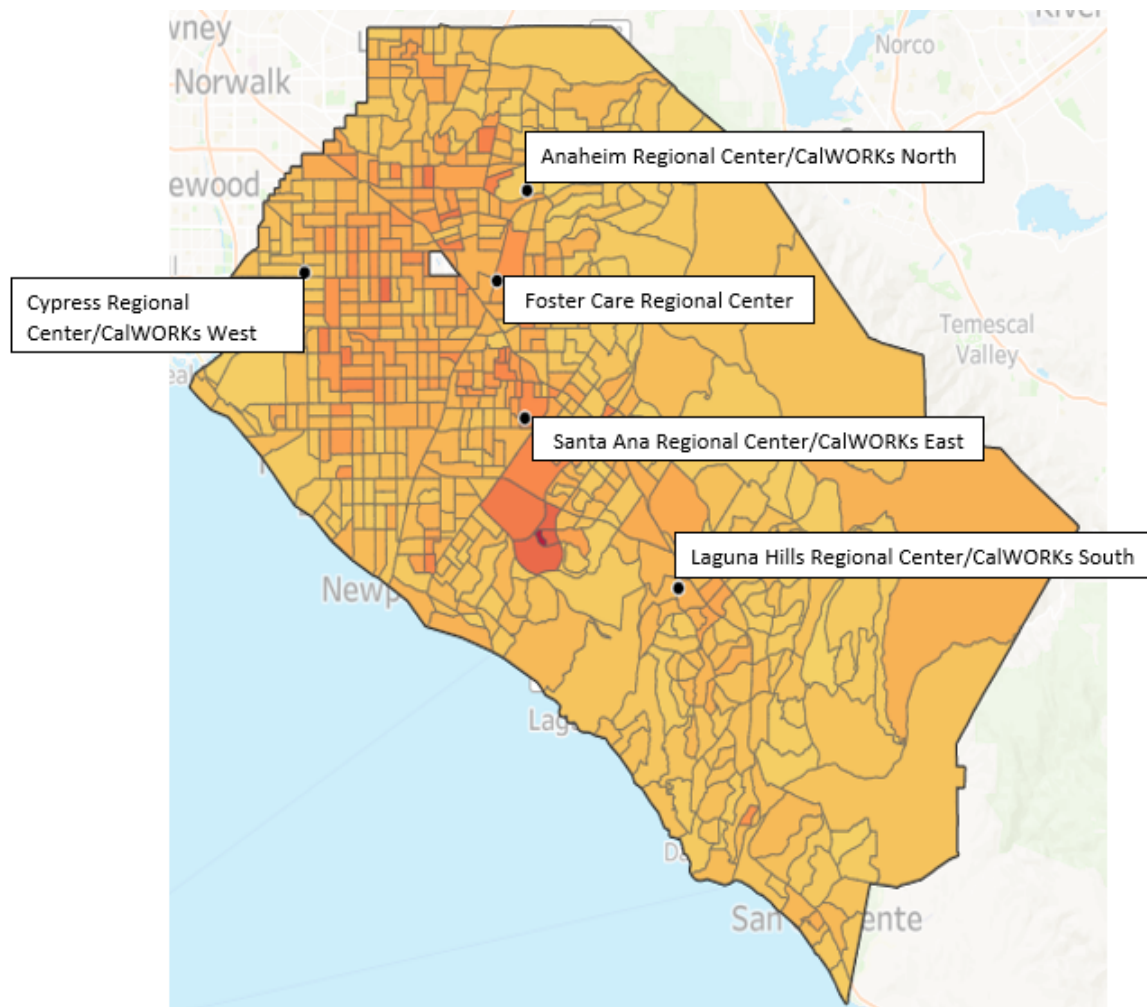
The FSS division operates in six different locations:

Agency Headquarters: 500 N. State College Blvd, Orange, CA 92868. Centrally located in Orange County, the Agency headquarters houses the Agency Executive Team, Deputy Directors, FSS Policy and Quality Assurance (PQA), and Divisional Operations, among other administrative groups. PQA analyzes and implements various programmatic changes (such as county letters from CDSS), maintains current policy documentation, and provides direction to regional staff. Additionally, the team oversees contracted service providers and quality assurance for various functions. Divisional Operations ensures that all operational needs including equipment, staffing, and procedures are in place to support evolving program and Agency needs.

The Agency operates five (5) regional offices that serve FSS clients and programs (Figure 14: Map of Orange County CalWORKs Offices and Poverty Dispersion). The public facing offices include:

- Anaheim Regional Center (also known as CalWORKs North)
 - 3320 E. La Palma Ave, Anaheim, CA 92806
- Cypress Regional Center (also known as CalWORKs West)
 - 6100 Chip Avenue, Cypress, CA 90630
 - This site is temporarily closed until December 2023 due to repairs and renovations.
- Foster Care Regional Center
 - 840 N. Eckhoff St, Orange, CA 92868
- Laguna Hills Regional Center (also known as CalWORKs South)
 - 23340 Moulton Pkwy, Laguna Hills, CA 92653
- Santa Ana Regional Center (also known as CalWORKs East)
 - 1928 S. Grand Avenue, Santa Ana, CA 92705
 - Program Integrity and Appeals are also located in this central location.

Figure 14: Map of Orange County CalWORKs Offices and Poverty Dispersion



Description: This map of Orange County displays the dispersion of poverty within Orange County and the location of the County of Orange Social Services Agency's CalWORKs offices.

Sources: ¹ [CDSS Cal-OAR Data Dashboard](#) (County Demographic Profile tab, Poverty Tract Map Sub-Section); ² [County of Orange Social Services Agency's CalWORKs Offices](#)

References on the Cal-CSA: Section 1 Part 1 Question 2, Section 1 Part 2 Question 4

Additionally, the Agency has CW/WTW staff co-located with our partner, the Santa Ana Workforce Development Board, and is currently exploring satellite locations such as community centers to expand services to.

Orange County CalWORKs operates in a caseload-based service delivery system. The Agency is determined to continuously modernize the service delivery method to better serve our clients and give better tools to our staff utilizing the following guiding principles and processes:

- First Contact Resolution – a cross-divisional concept that was implemented in the Spring of 2022. Assistance Programs (AP) and Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) have implemented this initiative that emphasizes the determination of benefits and resolution of outstanding tasks at the first interaction with the customer or task in a streamlined and efficient manner. At the customer's first point of contact—whether in person, over the phone, or through electronic or mail submission—eligibility workers will complete case actions using procedures and processing guides to assist the customer to the fullest extent possible and reduce customer wait times, handoffs, and subsequent work.
- CalWORKs 2.0 framework – a new approach to family self-sufficiency which focuses on helping clients set and achieve their goals. This initiative allows for a more flexible approach to service delivery, integrating emerging research and best practices on how adults learn and build critical skills. CalWORKs 2.0 considers the specific circumstances and needs of the whole family as they work toward self-sufficiency.
- No Wrong Door – a service delivery model which removes barriers and connects internal and external customers to services within Orange County. The County of Orange and the Agency are committed to serving all who enter our doors by connecting members of our community to services and assisting all customers with professionalism, courtesy, and respect.

Orange County is generally divided into northern and southern geographic regions. Significant political, demographic, economic, and cultural distinctions exist between northern and southern Orange County.

North Orange County includes Anaheim, Fullerton, La Habra, and Santa Ana, among other cities. North Orange County was the first part of Orange County to be developed and is culturally closer to neighboring Los Angeles County. This region has a higher proportion of Hispanic (mostly Mexican) and Asian (predominantly Vietnamese and Korean) residents, is more densely populated, younger, less wealthy, and has higher unemployment rates. It has more renters, fewer homeowners, and more gang activities recorded in Orange County. Anaheim and Santa Ana Regional Centers are the two offices that serve these areas and they are the largest regional centers by caseload and assigned staff.

South Orange County is more suburban, wealthier, less racially diverse, and more recently developed. South Orange County generally includes Irvine, Newport Beach, and the cities to the south, including Laguna Beach, Mission Viejo, and San Clemente, among others. Costa Mesa is sometimes included in South County, although it is located predominantly west of the Costa Mesa Freeway. The Laguna Hills Regional Center serves this area.

Located in West Orange County is the Cypress Regional Center which serves the cities of Garden Grove, Westminster, Fountain Valley, and Huntington Beach, among others. The west region of the County has a higher concentration of Vietnamese residents.

Located in central Orange County is the Foster Care Regional Center which serves various functions, including housing the Mutual Client FSS units which serve families who are co-involved with Child Welfare and CW/WTW.

Although single-family homes account for most of Orange County housing, Northern and Central Orange County are relatively more urbanized and denser than those areas south of Irvine, which are less dense and primarily suburban.

Moreover, the Agency processes requests for services through MyBenefitsCalWIN and the Agency's call center to provide more convenient and expanded assistance to all Orange County Residents. All Orange County CW/WTW offices are staffed with appropriate levels of bilingual line staff to serve, at a minimum, the top three (3) non-English languages. In situations where applicants or clients need support in another language, CW/WTW staff are required to utilize the County's contracted language line which maintains qualified on-call translators in numerous languages.

There are Employment & Eligibility Specialists (EESs) in the call center who take calls from customers who indicate in the call prompts that they are calling regarding CalWORKs. These EESs are from the FSS division and are available Monday through Friday from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM. All other times, such as during Saturday business hours, CalWORKs customers will be assisted by Eligibility Technicians from the AP division who have been provided instructions on handling CalWORKs calls. In the event a client has a question about their WTW case, the call agent will provide the name and telephone number of their assigned WTW case manager for further assistance.

The Agency utilizes a public-private model for case management and employment services where Orange County CalWORKs clients are served by County and contracted staff. Through a contract with Maximus, Inc. (Maximus), the Agency has access to additional capacity in staff and avenues to quickly adapt to caseload and language needs. A second, key contracted partner, EQUUS Workforce Solutions (EQUUS), provides Job Search Services, Job Search and Readiness Assistance, Active Job Search, Job Placement, Employment Counseling and Job Development, Subsidized Employment, and Vocational Training. Effective January 3, 2023, Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance, Inc. (OCAPICA) provides Pre and Post Supportive Services.

3. Description of how the organizational structure impacts CalWORKs business practices and service delivery.

Orange County CalWORKs offices are co-located with Assistance Programs and contracted partners, which results in a one-stop-shop allowing clients to be assisted in any regional office and apply for any program. This results in a higher rate of client satisfaction, better communication, less waiting time, more effective and efficient processes, and higher engagement for both participants and caseworkers (line staff in eligibility or case management roles). The Agency applies a No Wrong Door methodology which states that every Agency door and staff person is the correct location and person to inquire with about any service. Staff are to take time to listen and direct clients through appropriate warm hand-offs. Sometimes, this includes starting an application in one office and sending it to another, other times, it includes helping someone understand other governmental processes such as Social Security and Medicare. Clients and members of the public can experience similar levels of services and expertise at every office, even when their assigned worker is not in the office. Our CW/WTW offices follow an Officer of the Day model that schedules select staff to address walk-ins with active CalWORKs cases to ensure same day service.

The size and structure of the Agency are a strength to the CalWORKs program in many ways. Strong administrative teams support essential functions such as finance, accounting, staffing, communications, and training. As a result, staff and clients benefit from high-quality deliverables, well-kept facilities, effectively staffed lobby windows, and intake units available for new applications. Clients may also easily transition between regions to best serve their needs, generally to be closer to home.

Staff have the option to rotate to various assignments to move closer to home or learn a new job function to increase professional growth. As a part of the County of Orange, Agency staff are eligible to educational reimbursement, flex schedules, and time-off allowances. Additionally, the size of the Agency allows for various growth and promotion opportunities.

On the contrary, the size and structure of the Agency can cause pain points for staff. For example, some staff have reported a disconnect between line and administration staff. Part of the problem can be attributed to the many layers in the chain of command and the standardized processes that can feel less inclusive. Additionally, having a large workforce of approximately 4,488 approved positions allows for lots of specialization in function which can lead to less familiarity in handoffs, whether it be a case going from intake to continuing or a client being assigned a case manager. Moreover, due to COVID-19 and the safety and virtual measures that were implemented, line staff are also reporting less of a connection to clients.

4. Past changes that have impacted county practice, provision of services, and performance measures (where applicable).

FSS implemented a new Service Delivery Model in 2014 to streamline and enhance the quality of services, decrease wait times, and remove barriers. The service delivery structure begins with an intake worker determining eligibility and addressing financial and basic needs via the application process. Upon approval of CalWORKs, Agency staff strive to efficiently transfer the case to a continuing worker. This is especially important for households with work eligible participants, so that continuing staff can support the client in areas such as ongoing eligibility, supportive services, and will collaborate with the assigned WTW case manager.

In Orange County, the WTW case managers are responsible for employment support services. The case manager identifies barriers and makes the appropriate referrals to other programs, contracted partners, and community-based organizations. The case manager evaluates the client's strengths and goals and matches them with appropriate WTW activities through a collaborative process.

Also in 2014, the Agency implemented the Client Engagement System (CES) to assist case managers, eligibility workers, supervisors, and administrators in prioritizing workloads and quickly identifying the clients that have not been engaged or are not participating in employment activities. Using reports generated through CES, case managers, supervisors, and administrators can proactively work to assist clients, conduct monthly contacts, proactively review work participation, assess barriers, and coordinate services.

Different pilot projects were implemented to enhance engagement and collaboration between clients and staff. In 2015, the Agency implemented the Early Engagement initiative. The goal of this initiative was to assign WTW referrals to case managers within 24 hours. The process begins with clerical staff issuing an appointment letter to the client with the date and time of their Orientation and Appraisal Interview. Subsequently, case managers receive a calendar invite with the pre-scheduled appointments and are required to confirm availability for both parties within 24 hours. Finally, a day prior to the orientation appointment, EQUUS makes a reminder call. The Agency believes these improvements have contributed to the higher Orientation Attendance Rate (OC: 71.5%, State 53.4%), higher OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate (OC: 44.1%, State 25.4%), and higher First Activity Attendance Rate (OC: 73.3%, State 51.4%), for Orange County compared to the State and similar counties.

In 2018, the Agency implemented the Mutual Client (MC) project. MC is a CW/WTW and child welfare partnership where eligibility workers, case managers, and child welfare

social workers, collaborate to assist families together. MC aims to coordinate and streamline services for MC eligible families by consolidating Agency points of contacts, services, and funding. Families participating in this project are evaluated for all eligible services and are prioritized accordingly ensuring that barriers and activities are being addressed thoughtfully and in coordination with child welfare.

During the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Agency ensured all locations operated in compliance with federal, state, and local health orders while maintaining our commitment to protecting and supporting our employees and clients. In 2020, all Agency locations were outfitted with protective safeguards for clients and staff, including touchless sinks and water fountains, automatic hand sanitizer devices, automatic lobby doors, and plexiglass partitions.

In June 2022, the Agency implemented First Contact Resolution (FCR) which is a multi-divisional initiative to enhance service at all regional offices by reducing the need for case follow-ups and subsequent requests for service while optimizing processes for same-day eligibility determinations. Staff received training for various scenarios along with ideal resolutions and eligibility processes to consider when serving families. The workgroup developed eligibility tools aimed to simplify policy and procedures from various programs which helps workers efficiently assess client requests.

In July 2022, PQA implemented the Family Support Assessment (FSA) process. The FSA process aims to utilize a holistic, supportive approach to assist CalWORKs families in identifying areas of need, overcoming barriers, and promoting self-sufficiency. The FSA process includes assessing and addressing each referred family's needs and barriers, organizing a Family Support Team (FST), monitoring each family's progress for up to 12 months, and measuring outcomes. Caseworkers are encouraged to refer families to FSA when family needs include, but are not limited to, domestic, mental, or substance abuse services; housing and homeless resources; WTW participation concerns; and general safety concerns or legal issues.

Part 2. County Offices Locations Table

Figure 15: Locations

Office Name	Location (Address)	Urban or Rural	Average wait time (In Minutes)	Eligibility and WTW Services Co-located	Child Care Available On-Site	Play area for children	Diaper Bank co-located	Domestic Abuse Services On-Site	Mental Health Services On-Site	Substance Abuse Services On-Site	WIOA On-Site	Community College Representative On-Site	WTW Services Available	Other Co-Located Agencies
Headquarters	500 N. State College Blvd., Orange, CA 92868	Urban	20 Minutes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	N/A	N/A
Anaheim Regional Center/CalWORKs North	3320 E. La Palma Ave., Anaheim, CA 92806	Urban	20 Minutes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Resource Room and WTW Orientation	Public Health Nurse (PHN), District Attorney, Children and Family Services, Accounting, Sheriff-Special Officers, and Family Resource Center (on site one day a week)
Laguna Hills Regional Center/CalWORKs South	23340 Moulton Pkwy, Laguna Hills, CA 92653	Urban	20 Minutes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Workforce Services (JSR, Job Skills, Life Skills, Orientation, Resource Room)	Public Health Nurse (PHN), District Attorney, Children and Family Services, Accounting, Sheriff-Special Officers, and Family Resource Center (on site one day a week)
Santa Ana Regional Center/CalWORKs East	1928 S. Grand Ave., Santa Ana, CA 92705	Urban	20 Minutes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Resource Room and WTW Orientation	Public Health Nurse (PHN), District Attorney, Children and Family Services, Accounting, Sheriff-Special Officers, and Family Resource Center (on site one day a week)
Cypress Regional Center/CalWORKs West	6100 Chip Ave., Cypress, CA 90630	Urban	20 Minutes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Workforce Services (JSR, Job Skills, Life Skills, Orientation, Resource Room)	Public Health Nurse (PHN), District Attorney, Children and Family Services, Accounting, Sheriff-Special Officers, and Family Resource Center (on site one day a week)
Foster Care	840 N. Eckhoff Street Orange, CA 92868	Urban	20 Minutes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	N/A	Public Health Nurse (PHN), District Attorney, Children and Family Services, Accounting, Sheriff-Special Officers, and Family Resource Center (on site one day a week)

1. The number and locations of CalWORKs offices. Specify urban versus rural.

Please see Figure 15: Locations Table.

2. For each office specify: operations, service array, and other services offered (i.e., other human service or workforce programs).

Please see Figure 15: Locations Table.

3. Discuss whether eligibility and Welfare-to-Work (WTW) services are co-located, use of call-centers.

Please see Figure 15: Locations Table.

4. Describe office location in relation to the geographic dispersion of poverty within the county.

The poverty data below was captured using the Cal-OAR Poverty Heat Map on the CDSS website, which, at the time of the writing of this document, was based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates). The overall poverty rate in Orange County is 10.10%. A quick glance at Orange County's Poverty Heat Map (Figure 14: Map of Orange County CalWORKs Offices and Poverty Dispersion, page 21 of this document) reveals that the northern half of Orange County contains higher pockets of poverty in comparison to the southern half. The locations of the Orange County CalWORKs offices mirror this dispersion of poverty (four of the five offices are in the northern half of the county). Information about the rates of poverty surrounding each of the offices is detailed below.

Anaheim Regional Center (CalWORKs North) – The census tract that contains this office has a poverty rate of 2.7%. Of the 18 tracts within a 1.5-mile radius of the office, eight of the tracts have poverty rates above the County's average. The highest two poverty rates within the 1.5-mile radius are 28.5% (adjacent to the tract containing the Agency's office) and 21.8%. This office is located near major Orange County highways (California 91, State Route 55, and California 57).

Santa Ana Regional Center (CalWORKs East) – The census tract that contains this office has a poverty rate of 25.1%. Of the 21 tracts within a 1.5-mile radius of the office, 15 of the tracts have poverty rates above the County's average. The highest two poverty rates

within the 1.5-mile radius are 26.9% and 25.1%. This office is located near State Route 55 and Interstate 5.

Cypress Regional Center (CalWORKs West) – [temporarily closed for repairs] – The census tract that contains this office has a poverty rate of 4.6%. Of the 19 tracts within a 1.5-mile radius of the office, four of the tracts have poverty rates above the County's average. The highest two poverty rates within the 1.5-mile radius are 22.2% and 21.5%. This location provides access to clients who live in the western areas of Orange County and is located near Interstate 605, California 22, and Interstate 405. This location is also less than a mile away from the Regional Center of Orange County (RCOC) office. RCOC is a private non-profit organization that supports people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Laguna Hills Regional Center (CalWORKs South) – The census tract that contains this office has a poverty rate of 12.2%. Of the 13 tracts within a 1.5-mile radius of the office, eight of the tracts have poverty rates above the County's average. The highest two poverty rates within the 1.5-mile radius are 16% and 15.7%. This office is the southernmost located office and is nearby Interstate 5, providing access to clients living in the southern areas of Orange County.

Foster Care Regional Center – Serves cases throughout Orange County which are connected to Foster Care. The census tract that contains this office has a poverty rate of 15%. All 13 of the tracts within a 1.5-mile radius of the office have poverty rates above the County's average. The highest two poverty rates within the 1.5-mile radius are 23.4% and 23.1%. This office is near State Route 55, California 57, and California 22.

Part 3. Staff Functions & Workforce

Special Units Table

Figure 16: Special Units Table

Caseload Type	Used by County	Caseload (number)	Available at all County Offices
Sanction Caseload Unit	No	0	No
Family Stabilization Caseload Unit	Yes	87	Yes
Domestic Abuse Caseload Unit	Yes	145	Yes
Mental Health and/or Substance Abuse Caseload Unit	No	0	No
Housing/Homeless Population Caseload Unit	No	0	No
WTW Exempt Caseload Unit	No	0	No
Mutual Client Unit	Yes	154	Yes
Refugee Unit	Yes	51	Yes
Cal-Learn Unit	Yes	49	Yes

1. Describe how cases are assigned to workers and whether specialized caseload units exist.

Applications are assigned to Intake Employment and Eligibility Specialists (IEES) on a round robin basis. Language barriers are always evaluated and prioritized. However, if language coverage is not available with a certified bilingual IEES, the application is assigned to the next available IEES and staff are required to utilize the Agency's contracted language line/interpreter services to complete the eligibility application process.

When IEESs identify Immediate Need, Expedited Services, or Homeless Assistance needs, they process the applications immediately. For specialized services, IEESs create referrals for specialized continuing units such as the Domestic Abuse Services Unit (DASU), Mutual Client under the Foster Care Regional Center, Family Reunification, Family Stabilization, Housing Support Program (HSP), Home Visiting Program (HVP), Cal-Learn, Refugee, and/or Confidential caseloads.

After applications are approved, they are transferred to the continuing sections of their respective regions for ongoing maintenance. Cases are assigned in continuing in a similar fashion (round robin with considerations for language and specialized services when identified).

2. Describe average caseload size by service component, including specialized staff (e.g., those serving domestic abuse survivors).

Please see Figure 16: Special Units Table.

3. Describe staff onboarding and ongoing training requirements.

Currently, the Agency's Training and Career Development (TCD) team facilitates an onboarding experience that provides new employees, including those new to the division or specific assignments, with tools, resources, and information they need to perform in their new role. TCD provides program-specific Intensive Inductive Training (IIT) plans to ensure proficiency in job tasks and connects the new employee with crucial information, resources, and people within the organization.

Employment & Eligibility Specialists attend the CalWORKs & CalFresh IIT training course which is a twelve-week program that provides a comprehensive review of all the policies, procedures, and business processes required to perform in the eligibility assignment. IITs include shadowing and mentoring one-on-one instruction to help new staff practice eligibility concepts and procedures in a hands-on, real-world environment. In addition to addressing all eligibility related policies and SAWS entries, staff receive training for case carrying, over/underpayments and issuances, fraud, appeals, quality control, domestic abuse, homeless assistance and HSP, child and elder abuse, WTW Overview, HVP, Child Care, WTW Engagement, Family Stabilization, and SSI Advocacy.

Case managers attend the Welfare-to-Work IIT training plan which is a six-week program that provides a comprehensive review of all policies, procedures, and business processes, along with shadowing and mentoring. In this IIT, staff receive training and instruction for WTW Case Management, WTW Exemptions, Appraisal/OCAT, Job Search Readiness, Mutual Client, Employment Activities, OC Earns/WIB/EXPRT, ASMT/Learning Disabilities, Vocational Education, WTW Plans, Orientation, TANF, Behavioral Health, Supplemental Services, Cal-Learn, Domestic Abuse, Non-Compliance, HSP, HVP, and WTW Engagement.

After the IIT, staff are paired with mentors and are onboarded with incremental growth to their caseload. Mentors and supervisors make themselves available to provide hands-on training and point staff to various tools. Additionally, staff are welcome to attend refresher courses within the IIT series. Additional trainings that are part of the IIT series and Agency mandatory annual training programs include Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI), Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Civil Rights/Division 21,

Cyber Security Awareness, Creating an Ergonomically Correct Office Workspace, Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP), Rules of Conduct, and Information Security.

The Agency also provides mandatory Compliance Training for staff supporting any eligibility-based programs which include CW/WTW. These trainings include Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP), Employment Development Department (EDD) Acknowledgement, Fraud Refresher Training, and National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). Additionally, refresher trainings are offered as needed when Quality Assurance identifies knowledge gaps in certain topics or when new regulatory changes are implemented.

4. Discuss skill gap or organizational/workforce risks.

A skill gap usually emerges when employers struggle to hire people with the appropriate skills to perform the tasks required for an organization to operate effectively. In addition, existing employees may have outdated skills, creating a gap that can be difficult to fill, especially in a competitive labor market.

In recent years, the Agency, and County of Orange (County) have been experiencing challenges in hiring and retaining staff. The primary reason is the time it takes to hire. Additionally, the problem has intensified beginning in 2020, as it is becoming more common for candidates to no-show for interviews and decline job offers.

A new concern due to COVID-19 is that candidates are now placing very high value and expectations on workplace flexibilities as the public health emergency has forced everyone to reassess their priorities. Based on recent conversations with managers and supervisors regarding hiring, the Agency is observing that eligibility and case management roles are less attractive to some workers who are favoring remote jobs with more flexibility. This creates an issue for the Agency as administering CW/WTW requires high-volume, in person service at service center locations.

Over the past five (5) years, the Agency has experienced high turnover through retirements, promotions, and resignations. While retirements are unavoidable, high turnover through internal promotions and resignations create an issue of stability due to the workforce having less experience and lacking institutional knowledge.

Part 4. Partnerships

1. How do current partnerships impact business practices and service delivery?

Current and previous partnerships have helped the Agency by adding more staff, training, and technology resources to our programs. Pairing the Agency's current workforce and

resources with innovative and flexible contracted partners allows Orange County CW/WTW to be nimbler when responding to the needs of the community.

Our contracted partners help clients utilize resources from all around Orange County and neighboring communities. These partnerships help meet various client needs and expand the reach of support for Orange County CW/WTW clients. For example, contracted service providers who are working with similar populations (domestic violence or homeless) in neighboring counties may know of additional resources and can navigate neighboring county programs and resources with ease.

The Agency participates in regular meetings with Workforce Development Boards, post-secondary educational institutions, CalWORKs EOPS/CARE Advisory Boards, and the OC Adult Education CalWORKs Consortium. These forums have created feedback loops for the Agency to better understand alternative perspectives and have provided collaboration opportunities with partners. Additionally, these partnerships have allowed the Agency to better distribute information about services, trainings, job fairs, opportunities, and community events.

2. Are there any pending or potential partnerships that may impact service delivery?

The turnover of contracted service providers based on Request For Proposal guidelines and government contracting requirements can create challenges. For example, delays in approval of contracts and/or offboarding and onboarding contractors simultaneously impacts level of service and can be disruptive for a client being handed off to various caseworkers.

An expanded partnership that could potentially help improve outcomes for CW/WTW clients is the WDBs. Currently, utilization of WDBs seems to be focused on job opportunities and work experience. There may be an opportunity to explore more skills and interviewing training. Moreover, limited opportunities for living wage jobs may be impacting clients' motivation to participate in specific job activities due to disinterest in career track.

3. What service/partnership gaps currently exist? What impact does that have on service delivery, and what strategies or long-term plans does the CWD have to address these gaps?

In addition to expanding the utilization of WDBs, the Agency has identified an opportunity to better align and standardize some processes with contracted partners. Establishing a

clear delineation of services and responsibilities for each CW/WTW caseworker will be important to reduce miscommunications and the possibility of overwhelming clients with various points of contacts and unclear expectations of next steps. Theoretically, all staff should be working together and communicating effectively; however, the client experience needs to be further evaluated. Efforts to clarify services and expectations for each step of the way would also reduce any duplication of services or time loss due to a better understanding core processes for all parties involved.

Moreover, to address potential motivational interest issues surrounding employment activities, the Agency will be exploring additional subsidized and vocational training opportunities in sectors that will appeal to more workers and those looking for Work from Home opportunities.

During one of the focus groups, caseworkers identified the need for a less cumbersome Child Care application process. Currently, the Child Care team is looking at incorporating DocuSign to the authorization process to help reduce the duration of the process via convenient electronic form use.

Additionally, a major gap in services is related to WTW eligibility. Currently, undocumented adults are not eligible for WTW; therefore, these individuals are not being exposed to work opportunities that could potentially lift a family out of poverty. Families with no immigration status are not entitled to receive benefits that help to remove barriers, resulting in children and families in poverty dropping out of school, higher rates of substance abuse for teens, and low-income jobs.

Preliminary Cal-OAR data analysis broken down by sub demographics is showing lower performance for non-English speakers. The Agency will use the Cal-OAR cycle as an opportunity to further study this gap in services and will make recommendations through appropriate state forums as appropriate.

Part 5. Financial/Material Resources

1. Describe additional funding streams or material resources (i.e., funding in addition to the program allocations provided through CDSS) which support the CWD and have an impact on services provided to the CalWORKs population.

The Agency uses sources of funding, such as Title IV-E, Medi-Cal, Title 19, State Realignment, Title 20, CBCAP, CAPIT, Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF), the Child Welfare Services Outcome Improvement Project (CWSOIP), and private and public grants. Additionally, the Agency uses the Children's Trust Fund, Orangewood Children's Foundation resources, and Community-Based Family Resources and Support (CBFRS).

When appropriate, funds are strategically used to increase available services. For example, CalWORKs funding is shared through the identification of Mutual Clients, joint case planning, and referral of child welfare clients to CalWORKs-funded services.

Aside from the program allocations such as Housing Support Program, Home Visiting Program, Expanded Subsidized Employment, CalWORKs Single, and other CalWORKs funding, the Agency also links clients from child welfare programs such as Wraparound and State and Federal Child Welfare Services to expand the services available to CalWORKs population based on mutual eligibility.

2. How do these funding streams or material resources impact the CWD's performance measures?

In the last three years, CalWORKs Single allocation has fluctuated significantly. There were projected caseload increases that did not materialize. In addition, various other funding streams, such as CARES Act in FY 2020-21 and ARPA in FY 2021-22, resulted in the program claiming/needing fewer allocations.

Based on recent unprecedented events, the Agency cannot make assumptions on how changes in recent allocations would impact future performance. However, based on history prior to COVID-19, the Agency would like to acknowledge the difficulty created by large fluctuations in the CalWORKs allocations. Rapid changes in the CalWORKs allocations create a situation where the Agency cannot adapt quickly to changes and develop a core foundation of services. The challenge is that counties have trouble ramping up fast enough when monies come in (i.e. underspending in last few years). But when caseloads go down, the allocation is cut so dramatically that the Agency decimates programming and services. Then, when resources are needed again due to changes in circumstances, the Agency must re-build infrastructure.

3. Describe whether and why any specific program allocations provided through CDSS (e.g., specific allocations for mental health or similar services) within the past three fiscal years were only partially used, or if CWD expenditures in an area exceed its allocation during those years.

Figure 17

Allocation Name	FY2019-20 % of Allocation Expended	FY2020-21 % of Allocation Expended	FY2021-22 % of Allocation Expended
Single Allocation	86%	80%	94%
Expanded Subsidized Employment	70%	50%	54%
Mental Health and Substance Abuse	82%	92%	91%

The Agency experienced difficulty fully expending the Single, Expanded Subsidized Employment, and Mental Health and Substance Abuse allocations due to challenges created by COVID-19 and related events, such as: good cause waivers reducing the number of applicants engaging in activities; stay-at-home orders reducing overall program activity; expanded safety net programs (reducing the need for social services programs, specifically enhanced unemployment benefits); and capacity constraints related to balancing various pandemic related priorities.

Figure 18

Allocation Name	FY2019-20 % of Allocation Expended	FY2020-21 % of Allocation Expended	FY2021-22 % of Allocation Expended
Family Stabilization	181%	122%	66%

As mentioned in the previous question, the Agency exceeded expenditures in Family Stabilization in FY2019-20 and FY2020-21. The Agency credits the increased utilization of Family Stabilization (FS) to our efforts in reaching more eligible populations. Specifically, the Agency's Mutual Client efforts have led to increased services and eligibility to families co-involved with Child Welfare and CW/WTW. As part of the Mutual

Client efforts, families who are involved with Child Welfare are assigned to a specialized caseloads where staff from CW/WTW and Children & Family Services work together to serve families in a streamlined manner with more options for services. The Agency projects that expenditures under the Family Stabilization allocation will continue to grow as more integration opportunities are identified between programs.

Figure 19

Allocation Name	FY2019-20 % of Allocation Expended	FY2020-21 % of Allocation Expended	FY2021-22 % of Allocation Expended
Home Visiting Program	37%	75%	91%

For the Home Visiting Program (HVP), Orange County utilized 37%, 75%, and 91%, of the total allocations for FY2019-20, FY2020-21, and FY2021-22, respectively. For FY2019-20, the low utilization of the HVP allocation was due to issues with acceptance of services and slow growth in the new program. For FY2020-21, client concerns with strangers visiting their home during a public health emergency outweighed the benefits of receiving services resulting in lower-than-expected utilization of the HVP allocation.

Figure 20

Allocation Name	FY2019-20 % of Allocation Expended	FY2020-21 % of Allocation Expended	FY2021-22 % of Allocation Expended
Housing Support Program	93%	87%	*26%

For the Housing Support Program (HSP), Orange County utilized 93% and 87% of the total allocations for FY2019-20 and FY2020-21, respectively. The FY2020-21 would have been fully expended had it been issued earlier in the year. CWDs were notified on October 20, 2020, of the additional funding. Orange County contracts with a housing services provider to deliver HSP services to Orange County CW/WTW participants. Due to the lengthy process of augmenting and amending a contract, funds were not available for expenditure until late in the fiscal year.

*In FY2021-22, CWDs received multi-year allocations for HSP and other housing programs. The allocation was announced on March 30, 2022; however, this allocation along with the rest that utilized pandemic-era funding allowed for multi-year drawdowns.

The Agency encourages CDSS to allow for multi-year allocations, when possible, to give CWDs more time to plan and deploy funding across various supportive services, including HSP, HVP, and Family Stabilization.

Section 2. Partner and Collaborator Engagement and Feedback

Part 1. Overall Partner and Collaborator Engagement

Partner Engagement Table

Figure 21: Partner Engagement Table

Partners and Collaborators	Focus Group	Newsletter	Interview	In-person meeting	Survey	Phone	Virtual Meeting
CalWORKs Staff	Intermittently						Monthly
CalWORKs Management	Intermittently						Weekly
Current Clients					Monthly		
Former Clients							
Human Services Partners							Monthly
Community College Representatives	Intermittently						Bi-monthly
Tribal Organizations							
Local Workforce Development Board							Bi-Monthly
Adult Education Providers							Bi-Monthly
Domestic Abuse Services Providers							Monthly
Housing Support Program (HSP)							Monthly
EQUUS	Intermittently						Monthly
MAXIMUS	Intermittently						Monthly
Families and Communities Together							Monthly
Tustin Family Campus Early Education							Monthly
Foster Assessment & OC Health Care Agency							Bi-Monthly
SSI Advocacy Group							Monthly

1. Describe the process used to identify partners and collaborators.

To identify the Agency's partners, the Cal-OAR Team reviewed guidance from ACL 19-108 which requires for CWDs to collaborate with County CW administrators, supervisors, and caseworkers; current and former clients; and agency partners. Additionally, ACL 19-108 suggests CWDs collaborate with community colleges, tribal organizations, local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), adult education providers, and domestic abuse services providers.

As of the writing of this document, the Cal-OAR Team has formed a cohort of current and former CalWORKs clients interested in taking part in a focus group and sharing their feedback regarding the CalWORKs program and the CalWORKs System Improvement Plan (Cal-SIP). The meeting is planned for March 2023. The Team recognizes our stakeholders' critical role in developing this County Self-Assessment, and we value the insights shared through engagement.

2. Describe how the CWD engaged partners and collaborators, including the method and frequency of engagement.

Please see the Partner Engagement Table.

3. Results of Partner and Collaborator engagement – a summary of feedback should be included here, with references to appropriate performance measure analysis where additional, more complete analysis is to be conducted.

In 2021, the Agency contracted Shared Vision Consultants (SVC) to assist with the Cal-CQI process. SVC helped the Agency establish and facilitate focus groups for Educational Stakeholders and Specialized Services. The Cal-OAR Team facilitated focus groups for caseworkers, CW/WTW administrators, and EQUUS. Focus groups began in November 2021.

SVC conducted the first focus group via Zoom with Educational Stakeholders on November 21, 2021. The session focused on a series of foundational and program specific questions. All the participants were actively engaged in the brainstorming session and provided excellent feedback.

Participants agreed that the relationship between their schools and agencies has improved over the last 3 - 4 years due to leadership change and culture change attributed

to the implementation of CalWORKs 2.0. The participants stated that the quarterly meetings and the education consortium have been helpful in better understanding regulations and making personal connections. Designating a liaison at regional offices has been beneficial. Contact points at each regional office have significantly improved communication and access to information.

Educational representatives stated updated training for Agency staff had been a challenge, e.g., CW/WTW staff sometimes appears not informed or fully trained when new legislation is implemented. The participants reported that CW/WTW staff sometimes does not acknowledge the expertise of educators in these programs regarding the CalWORKs program and perceive educators as overstepping their boundaries, which impacts students who experience tension between their school counselors and CW/WTW representatives. Knowing whom to contact and having current information about where answers can be found is an ongoing challenge. A participant from a school, expressed that the recent partnership is not as strong as needed and would like staff to come on-site for a day or two per week. Transportation is also a continuing obstacle, even distances as short as a few miles. Although a few miles may not seem significant, for some populations who perceive leaving their community as unsafe, 5 - 6 miles can be a tremendous obstacle.

Most participants reported that the students they receive are a good fit, especially for those enrolling in non-graded courses, e.g., English as a Second Language (ESL), General Educational Development (GED), and high school (HS) diploma programs. The participants indicated they did not know which students are Welfare-To-Work referrals and having that information would have encouraged more attention to the student and case management. The students transferring from community college to a four-year program do not have transitional support.

Despite the appropriateness of the referral, participants agreed that these students brought them significant challenges, e.g., domestic violence, a history of substance abuse, lack of adequate child care, housing instability, and psychological stresses.

The second focus group conducted by SVC was for Specialized Services on January 11, 2022, via Zoom. All participants were actively engaged in the brainstorming session and provided excellent feedback.

Focus group participants had been employed in the field for multiple years (5-20 years) and agreed that the Agency has steadily worked to improve the relationship with them, especially in recent years. The participants described the Agency as “open to feedback” and willing to work with partners to solve problems or miscommunications.

The Agency has improved communication through regularly scheduled meetings, inviting partners to discuss policy and procedure updates, regulation changes, and documentation requirements.

Frequent changes of case managers due to transfers, promotions, or retirements is a challenge for clients who are expected to develop high trust relationships. When staff leave or transfer, there is no provision for transition to the next case manager, which harms the client and the service provider, e.g., if caseworkers do not inform providers that a CalWORKs case is closing. As a result, a plan for post-CalWORKs services cannot be developed.

Participants emphasized the need for regular training for all case managers by the contracted agencies about what agencies can and cannot provide as essential to the effective use of the Agency's services. Incorrect referrals require re-referrals which is exhausting for the client and undermines motivation. An example is referring a client who does not qualify for agency services, e.g., a client without the right to work in the United States.

Focus group participants emphasized that clients generally “do better when they can choose to participate in a program or service than when assigned.” Clients with external family support and prior work experience seem to be the most successful.

Homelessness and housing instability are significant obstacles to families' stabilizing and finding employment. Especially in recent years, ongoing client challenges increased by the insufficient number of proprietors willing to accept Section 8 Housing and Urban Development (HUD) vouchers from CalWORKs clients.

Reliable child care and transportation are another impediment to maintaining employment and housing stability. The participants agreed clients would benefit from not being bounced around between stages in child care. One added complication appears in cases where the client does not have enough CalWORKs time left to complete the program. Additionally, challenges were faced with the onset of COVID-19 among providers as well as clients who were reluctant to utilize licensed child care facilities.

Participants recommended that the client referral process should be revised with an emphasis on the client's needs and goals and should be staged, allowing the client to remedy the current crisis before being assigned another goal/task. The referral's order and relevance are essential to the client's success. Inappropriate referrals can result in missed opportunities for clients.

The Caseworker Focus Group looked closely at Educational Activities & Employment and Income in the Welfare-To-Work (WTW) Program. Participants included Maximus case managers, County case managers, and County Continuing Employment and Eligibility

Specialists. The Caseworker Focus Group was held over two days on July 26, 2022 and August 16, 2022, each session running for four (4) hours.

Most clients receiving Advance Ancillary timely before starting school have reported higher client satisfaction and success rate. Seventy-five percent of the participants agree that Advance Ancillary, laptops, parking fees, and mileage are working well. Certificate Programs at Community Colleges and GED and Technical Education/Healthcare through Work Development Boards are trendy and well-received by the clients.

Fifty percent agreed that Bridging activities during college session breaks are not working well. Clients struggle to meet participation hours during spring and winter break. The Non-Compliance process is too lengthy and cumbersome. By the time the financial sanction is imposed, which is not the goal of the case managers, the client is back to school and meeting participation hours; therefore, case managers should be spending that time engaging other clients.

Cell-Ed (a learning program that enables participants to acquire essential skills through a variety of distance learning courses) is a recent activity implemented in 2021. The perception is that the clients do not gain any benefit and get bored or feel lost, so they stop participating. The college application process is lengthy, requires much paperwork, and is overly complex, discouraging clients from applying.

More than fifty percent of the focus group participants feel a lack of specificity in an assessment of the whole family's strengths and weaknesses. This is a missed opportunity for the case manager and client to collaborate and be able to find appropriate activities.

There is a lack of emphasis on ESL for monolingual/non-English participants. We need to offer participants programs that combine ESL and vocational training, as these participants will find it difficult to succeed in most jobs that pay living wages in Orange County without English proficiency.

Seventy-five percent of the workgroup members stated the main barriers to successfully engaging clients in educational activities are lack of motivation/interest, lack of self-confidence/underestimating their abilities, domestic/substance abuse, learning/physical/mental disability, homelessness, child care education, and process guidance.

They all agreed that housing and tuition fees for clients who do not qualify for financial aid (e.g. students with a grade point average (GPA) less than 2.0), and additional services for clients with learning disability needs are not being met.

Some strategies they feel can enhance clients' engagement in educational activities are motivating students through bonuses/incentives upon completion and targeted outreach to clients interested in education, such as clients under exemptions. Additionally, enhance communication encouragement and empowerment to see their potential, offer hybrid activities for clients (ESL and vocational training), explore options to get a certification or short-term diploma in the field that they are currently working, or add more educational activities through WDBs, and holistic family assessment and services offering mental health and supportive services for school-age children.

Seventy-five percent stated the main reasons clients return to CalWORKs program after exiting the program for over income are lack of retention services. These retention services include housing, mileage, ancillary, lack of support through lifestyle change/stress, and lack of safety net after obtaining full-time employment, which sometimes results in the client being unable to sustain living independently due to the high cost of living in Orange County.

The fourth focus group was with EQUUS, a contracted partner for employment services. The participants of the workgroup agreed that the barriers that prevent the clients from participating are not having all proper paperwork (e.g. Driver's License, social security card) in place, lack of motivation, confidence, professionalism, and interview skills. Additionally, lack of reliable child care has been especially problematic, the risk of or actively experiencing homelessness and not receiving advance mileage are also concerns.

They strongly agreed that the strategies to remove these barriers are to ensure assignments match the current needs. Case managers need to be more aware of client's needs and skill gaps, issue advance mileage and other supportive services before assigning activities and be willing to go the extra mile to motivate clients to accomplish their goals.

The fifth focus group was with CW administrators to brainstorm the advantages of current partnerships and service gaps. They all agree that existing partnerships benefit everyone. Solid communication and clear expectations exist; however, they feel there is a gap in the collaboration and services provided as most of the partners focus on WTW services. These services should be expanded to non-WTW populations such as undocumented persons and children.

They stated we must also expand our partnership with the WDBs to find better jobs with higher pay for our client's and build stronger relationships with community colleges.

Regarding family assessments, the Agency is moving towards the holistic assessment of the family needs, but we must assess the necessary resources and partnerships to

address these needs and follow up on the progress and outcome. Tracking referrals for all members were also highlighted as an opportunity for improvement.

Based on the feedback received from the focus groups, further analysis of the Initial Engagement and Ongoing Engagement grouping of performance measures may be beneficial. Focusing on these performance measures may lead to improvements in the areas mentioned above, including sustained goal achievement and barrier mitigation. For example, our Partners and Collaborators highlighted opportunities for revisiting barrier removal processes, enhancing the client-case manager relationship, and increased access and understanding of how to utilize child care and transportation authorizations. The Cal-OAR Team believes that enhancements around these focus areas will lead to an increase in Orientation Attendance Rate and Engagement Rate. For more details about Orange County's performance in these groupings, refer to Section 4, Part 1, Question 2 and Section 5, Part 1, Question 2 of this self-assessment.

Part 2. Client Experience

1. Client Experience at CalWORKs offices. For Example, the comfort and security of the office, or the client reaction to wait time or provided amenities.

The Agency's primary form of gathering client feedback was through the Client Satisfaction Survey. According to the CDSS Client Satisfaction Survey, between July 2022 through November 2022, Orange County received 75 responses.

Out of 25 participants who responded to the "My family (if applicable) and I felt welcomed at the office." statement, 20 (80%) participants either Agreed or Strongly Agreed with this statement. Four (16%) participants responded as Undecided and 1 (4%) participant responded as Disagree.

Out of 32 participants who responded to the "Overall, I believe my time at the office was valued." statement, 23 (72%) participants either Agreed or Strongly Agreed with this statement. Four (12%) participants responded as Undecided and 5 (16%) participants responded as Disagree or Strongly Disagree. As of November 2022, average wait times are approximately 20 minutes at Orange County CW/WTW regional offices as measured by the Agency's queuing system, Nemo-Q.

Out of 32 participants who responded to the "The information I have received from the county has been the same throughout my participation in the WTW program." statement, 25 (78%) participants either Agreed or Strongly Agreed with this statement. Three (9%) participants responded as Undecided and 4 (13%) participants responded as Disagree or Strongly Disagree.

2. The reasons why, and the ways in which, families utilize the CalWORKs program.

Generally, families apply for CalWORKs due to financial hardships (including unemployment and underemployment), disability needs, homelessness and housing issues, lack of healthcare, and related emergency situations.

3. Other client outreach methods utilized, as applicable (e.g., focus groups).

Please see Figure 21: Partner Engagement Table.

Part 3. Client Satisfaction Survey

1. Summarize findings from the client satisfaction survey.

The Agency received a total of 75 responses for the Client Satisfaction Survey over five (5) months of distribution. The Cal-OAR Team does not have enough information to make inferences on the findings of this survey as each question only averaged 19 – 32 responses.

2. Discuss where the results of the survey align with measure performance results, and where they diverge.

The Agency received a total of 75 responses for the Client Satisfaction Survey over five (5) months of distribution. The Cal-OAR Team does not have enough information to make inferences on the findings of this survey as each question only averaged 19 – 32 responses.

3. How did the survey results influence the county measure analysis?

The Agency received a total of 75 responses for the Client Satisfaction Survey over five (5) months of distribution. The Cal-OAR Team does not have enough information to make inferences on the findings of this survey as each question only averaged 19 – 32 responses.

Section 3. Barrier Removal Services

Part 1. Key Data

Figure 22: Barrier Removal Services Key Data Table

Data Element	Value
1a. Average monthly number of OCAT recommendations for domestic abuse services.	156
1b. Average monthly number of OCAT recommendations for substance abuse services.	13
1c. Average monthly number of OCAT recommendations for mental health services.	135
2a. Average referred for Domestic Abuse Services that have an exemption, good cause, or program waiver.	44
2b. Average referred for Domestic Abuse Services receiving these services through the Family Stabilization program.	8
2c. Average referred for Domestic Abuse Services receiving Homeless Assistance or Housing Support Program services.	0
3a. Average referred for Substance Abuse Services that have an exemption, good cause, or program waiver.	1
3b. Average referred for Substance Abuse Services receiving these services through the Family Stabilization program.	0
3c. Average referred for Substance Abuse Services receiving Homeless Assistance or Housing Support Program services.	0
4a. Average referred for Mental Health Services that have an exemption, good cause, or program waiver.	47
4b. Average referred for Mental Health Services receiving these services through the Family Stabilization program.	18
4c. Average referred for Mental Health Services receiving Homeless Assistance or Housing Support Program services.	0
5. Average monthly number of individuals that completed the Learning Needs Screening	N/A*
6. Average monthly number of referrals generated for Learning Needs Evaluation	N/A*
7. Average monthly number of individuals that waived the Learning Needs Screening	N/A*

*Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

Part 2. Service Utilization and Access

Barrier Removal Table

Figure 23: Barrier Removal Table

Service	Offered
Mental Health	Yes
Substance Abuse	Yes
Domestic Abuse	Yes
Legal Services	Yes
Public Health Nurse	Yes
Family Stabilization	Yes
Housing Support	Yes
Family Assessment	Yes
Child Care	Yes
Home Visiting Program	Yes

Barrier Noticing Table

Figure 24: Barrier Noticing Table

Type	Service Availability	Good cause/Waiver
Orientation	Yes	Yes
Appraisal	Yes	Yes
Assessment	Yes	Yes
Flyer	Yes	No
Posters in office	Yes	No
Intake Packet	Yes	No
Appraisal Packet	Yes	Yes

1. What barrier removal services are offered to clients?

Please see Figure 23: Barrier Removal Table.

2. Discuss any unmet needs and gaps in barrier removal services. Are there strategies or long-term plans to address gaps in service? Are services in neighboring counties currently leveraged where gaps exist locally?

One of the primary goals of CW/WTW is to help able-bodied unemployed and underemployed parents enter the workforce and find their path to self-sufficiency. Unfortunately, CalWORKs families often need more support outside of services to the WTW participant. The identified gap exists in screening for and providing services to the whole family, not just those we are engaging for WTW participation. For example, if a new CalWORKs family is not properly assessed for barriers that can be destabilizing the family and the caseworkers are primarily focused on work participation, the CalWORKs family may be suffering due to mental health, substance abuse, or learning needs that have not been properly addressed. As a result, the CalWORKs family is not engaged in WTW or additional services. Similarly, undocumented adults are not being offered employment support activities which are essential to helping them earn a living wage in Orange County.

The impact of Latino immigrants in Orange County creates a particular challenge for the Agency which continues to hire a bilingual and bicultural workforce and utilize vendors tailored to serve the diversity of our population. For additional information regarding FSS staff Bilingual Languages by classification, see Demographics Section, Question #5.

Families with non-citizen members do not receive services and benefits at the same rate as the general CalWORKs population. This results in a higher level of impact and challenges to this population due to the cost of living in Orange County and the requirements to obtain a living wage job (Refer to Agency Characteristics, Question #3 for additional information).

As appropriate, a participant lacking basic literacy, basic mathematics skills, a high school diploma/GED, or English language skills is given the option of selecting and participating in Adult Basic Education (ABE) WTW activities. Adult Basic Education can be a stand-alone activity to enable participants to fully focus on overcoming this barrier.

The Agency has been proactively working to address this family needs gap. The Family Support Assessment (FSA) Process monitors CalWORKs families (including zero-parent cases) for up to 12 months from the date of the first Family Support Team (FST) meeting. The FST tracks the number of families serviced per FY, types of barriers, services provided, length of time before exiting the FSA, and the reason for exiting the FSA. FST Regional Coordinators have established strong working relationships with contracted providers to handhold the clients and any family members (including children and

extended family members) through the referral process and provide resources within the community for those not eligible for services under the CalWORKs program.

Additionally, recent contract agreements such as Case Management Services (CMS) and Integrated Job Services (IJS) include outcome objectives that are more aligned with CalOAR reporting requirements. For example, the CMS contract includes objectives for Sanction Resolution and Wage Progression. Service requirements in the current CMS contract include the CalWORKs 2.0 approach which sets goals tailored to the participant's strengths to help them become self-sufficient.

Post Aid services are another unmet need. Once clients exit CW/WTW there is a feeling of a "loss of safety net." Post-aid services will provide opportunities to build core capabilities critical to managing adversity, navigating a long-term career trajectory, and balancing life, family, and work challenges. The Agency is happy to report that effective January 2023, Orange County CW/WTW will offer post-aid services through Employment Services - Post-Aid Supportive Services (ES-PASS). ES-PASS focuses on identifying the needs of former CW/WTW participants and provides resources to overcome barriers to self-sufficiency. ES PASS assists with basic needs items such as transportation, housing, child care, and other supportive services. Additional assistance will be provided to post-aid participants, with verified employment, to support job retention for up to twelve (12) months.

For CW/WTW clients co-involved with child welfare, Linkages, known as Mutual Client (MC) in Orange County has shown promise and success. MC is the collaboration and coordinated case planning by staff at both Children and Family Services (CFS) and FSS, working together to provide services to families with an active CalWORKs case in an open child welfare referral or case. This collaboration of services is designed to best meet the needs of these families through a streamlined approach that maximizes CalWORKs funding while increasing family empowerment, self-sufficiency, and decreasing the risk of child maltreatment. In addition to a MC monthly report, Linkages families are identified through a review of CalWIN and CWS/CMS at various points in the case including, but not limited to, initial calls to the Child Abuse Registry, when an Application for Petition is submitted on behalf of a child, when there is a change in the legal status of the child welfare case, and through the FSS MC staff attending and participating in the Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings. The Mutual Client staff attend these meetings to assess for new potential eligibility to CalWORKs services as well as to provide services to existing CalWORKs families.

3. Discuss gaps between OCAT recommendations for services and referrals for services.

Gaps in OCAT recommendations for services and referrals are likely attributed to:

- 1) The fact that OCAT recommendations for services are generated based on client responses during the Appraisal. Clients may decline services if they believe they do not need the service.
- 2) OCAT questionnaire is mainly focused on addressing clients' needs and not addressing other family barrier or life situation that may impact participation. Examples include child safety and well-being concerns, mental health issues, or substance abuse problems.

Part 3. Offer of Services, Barrier Identification, and Referral Process

1. When and how are barrier removal services discussed in the CalWORKs process?

The Agency distributes flyers at all CW/WTW regional office lobbies with information on barrier removal services for Domestic Abuse, Mental Health, Family Stabilization, and other barriers. Barrier removal services are discussed at intake interviews, Orientation, Appraisal, Recertification, anytime the client discloses a destabilizing crisis, as part of the non-compliance process, and when triggered by regular case contact or client disclosure. Flyers and brochures for available services are included in the Application, Appraisal, and Redetermination packets, as applicable.

Caseworkers are trained to understand the value and importance of interviewing. Caseworkers review all information available about the client and case (application, previous history with agency, verifications, etc.) and develop a list of subjects they would like more clarity on such as employment history, barriers to work participation, and household composition.

Additionally, caseworkers understand the importance of building rapport with clients from the start and demonstrating that our goal is to serve the clients in ways that are most beneficial to them. At the beginning of interviews, caseworkers confirm that all information shared is confidential and essential towards properly evaluating family needs and removing barriers.

Ideally, and generally, clients respond to this approach and explain their circumstances and needs. Caseworkers observe body language and listen attentively to pick up on non-verbal communication and to ensure clients feel heard. Then, caseworkers ask clarifying

questions to ensure that they are understanding correctly and rephrase what they are hearing for the client to confirm the accuracy.

At intake, Employment and Eligibility Specialists are required to offer the Getting to Know You Tool (a CalWORKs 2.0 tool) to each client, which assists workers in assessing barriers. After barriers are identified, Intake Employment and Eligibility Specialists offer appropriate barrier removal services, explain the purpose of each referral, and the process(es).

During Appraisal, the client's employment history, educational background, level of employable skills, and barriers are assessed using the Online CalWORKs Appraisal Tool (OCAT). Case managers are trained and encouraged to follow Motivational Interviewing best practices. Additionally, the CalWORKs 2.0 Needs Assessment and Quality of Life tools are offered during the Appraisal Interview.

Upon completion of the OCAT Appraisal/Re-Appraisal Interview, case managers review the Appraisal Summary and Recommendations Report (ASR) to make appropriate referral(s).

2. What is the process for referring a client for barrier removal services once the barrier is identified? How does the CWD follow up to see if clients are receiving services?

Agency staff and contracted service providers are responsible for identifying any barrier removal service needs and provide referrals and linkages. When clients refuse or decline services, workers are directed to conduct frequent follow-ups during monthly contact or other regular interactions to ensure the safety and well-being of the family and children are in place and to remind clients of services available to them. If workers suspect or receive information regarding a child's health or safety is jeopardized, they follow the internal guidelines for mandated reporters. Case managers follow up with clients during monthly and regular contact to ensure satisfaction with the service provided by agency contractors (Refer to Section 3, Part 2, Question 2 for additional information). All grievances are channeled to appropriate program managers, program integrity, and quality assurance staff.

WTW participants who are experiencing a destabilizing crisis are assessed for Family Stabilization (FS) services. If the participant meets the eligibility criteria for FS, the WTW case manager will advise the participant of FS services and encourage them to accept a referral. If the participant agrees, the case manager will complete and submit a referral to a specialized unit who provides intensive and robust case management services, including services provided by the Family Resource Centers (FRCs), Behavioral Health

Services (BHS), Domestic Abuse Services Unit (DASU), Public Health Nurse (PHN), Integrated Job Services (IJS), and/or other supportive services.

If the situation is related to Domestic Abuse and the client accepts the services, the worker submits a referral to DASU. The referral is received by a Senior Social Worker (SSW) who evaluates the referral within 24 hours or one business day. If the domestic abuse referral is approved, the family is immediately assigned to a specialized case manager.

The DASU services are delivered internally and in collaboration with partners such as shelters, transportation, legal aid, and other needs to assist the family in overcoming this barrier.

If the client does not disclose Domestic Abuse, but has a destabilizing crisis, a case manager is assigned and must evaluate for FS. FS is a voluntary component of the WTW program intended to provide needed services and interventions to assist families facing a crisis or challenging circumstances. FS services aim to minimize the duration of instability experienced by a family during a crisis. A qualifying crisis is any identified event or circumstance experienced by an adult or child(ren) in the Assistance Unit that is affecting the well-being of the family or preventing self-sufficiency. A specialized case manager will make the referrals to appropriate County and community-based services to address the family's crisis.

Regulations require that Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (hereafter known as Behavioral Health Services (BHS)) be provided to CalWORKs participants. The OC Health Care Agency (HCA) co-locates BHS Regional Coordinators at each regional office to accept referrals from CalWORKs caseworkers. HCA contracted providers complete initial evaluations of a participant's BHS needs and arrange or provide necessary treatment services.

The Agency offers a BHS Brochure which provides general information about available behavioral health services and includes a confidential self-test. The brochure is included in the CalWORKs application packet and is shared with participants when discussing behavioral health issues.

BHS Regional Coordinators receive referrals through the appropriate regional BHS mailbox. After initial outreach and contact is completed by the BHS Regional Coordinator with the participant, the referral and questionnaire are forwarded to the appropriate BHS contracted supervisor for assignment to a counselor. Upon notification of assignment, the BHS Regional Coordinator will forward the counselor's name to the case manager. The BHS Regional Coordinator will also update CalWIN to reflect the assigned counselor's name.

If within ten working days, initial outreach efforts are unsuccessful, the BHS Regional Coordinator will contact the case manager to indicate that the referral is being closed. CalWIN will be updated to reflect the latest information.

BHS Counselors are required to inform the client regarding their diagnosis, treatment plan, and confidentiality requirements. Counselors must obtain authorization from the participant to respond to the case manager regarding the referral status and obtain information from current and future treatment providers to monitor cooperation with treatment as a component of the WTW plan.

The assigned case manager must receive a copy of the BHS referral status within 72 hours of the initial appointment. The preliminary service plan includes the number of days and hours of participation, the initial treatment schedule, and when/if the participant has entered a state-licensed residential treatment facility which requires the client to stay at the program site.

Each month BHS Counselors complete and submit the form to the BHS Regional Coordinator, who forwards the form to the assigned case manager by the 10th of the month after reviewing it for completeness.

The Agency offers referrals to Public Health Nurse Services (PHN). PHN services are a collaborative effort to provide in-person and/or telephonic health related assessments and case management services to WTW participants and/or their families to:

- Assess health needs and provide health resources to assist participants and their families in overcoming medical barriers that may prevent their ability to participate in WTW services.
- Promote healthy lifestyles and facilitate access to health services to help participants and their families prevent disease and disability and become self-sufficient.

Once a client accepts the referral to PHN, the worker completes and sends a referral to a designated regional Public Health Nurse to provide the service.

The Agency offers Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Advocacy Services for WTW Exempt clients through the Public Consulting Group (PCG) to assist clients who have been determined to be exempt from WTW participation due to a permanent and/or chronic disability with the SSI Application process. If it is determined that a client meets the eligibility criteria, the caseworker provides the client with an SSI advocacy Service Brochure and completes and submits a referral to PCG.

3. Does the CWD implement a whole person care approach, which considers the full spectrum of individual and family needs?

The Agency recently revamped the multi-disciplinary team model to be more client focused with centralized resource coordination through a specialized team dedicated to serving high barrier clients. The Family Support Team (FST) and Family Support Assessment (FSA) were implemented on July 1, 2022. The FSA process aims to utilize a holistic, supportive approach to assist families in identifying areas of need, overcoming barriers, and promoting self-sufficiency. The FSA process includes assessing the family's needs; organizing FST Meetings to coordinate services; following up on referrals and next steps; monitoring the family's progress; and measuring FSA outcomes (Reference Section 3, Part 2, Question 1, and Section 1, Part 1, Question 4).

In 2018, the Agency implemented the Mutual Client (MC) project. MC is a CW/WTW and child welfare partnership where eligibility workers, case managers, and child welfare social workers, collaborate to assist families together (Refer to Section 3, Part 2, Question 2 for additional details).

In April 2019, the Agency implemented the Home Visiting Program (HVP) service component. HVP delivers home visiting services to pregnant persons, parents, or caretaker relatives enrolled in the CalWORKs program to support positive health, development, and well-being outcomes in program recipients and their children. HVP uses an inter-generational approach to provide 24 months of home visiting services. By helping families achieve stability while participating in HVP, the program aims to lay the foundation for other long-term goals such as future educational opportunities, economic progress, and greater financial opportunities.

4. How does the CWD package or “market” services to clients; How does the CWD help clients make informed decisions?

Please see Figure 24: Barrier Removal Noticing Table.

5. Explain how safety plans are used in the CWD for survivors of domestic abuse?

The Agency notifies all clients about the availability of domestic abuse services both verbally and in writing, at Application, during the development of the WTW plan, and at Recertification. The clients are informed about domestic abuse waivers and that WTW plans may be tailored to accommodate the client's needs. The Domestic Abuse Services

& Safety Plan brochure (F063-41-169) provides general information about domestic abuse and services available to assist survivors and their families. The brochure is included in the Application and Recertification packets, and is shared with participants during the WTW Orientation and Appraisal or whenever discussing domestic abuse.

The family's safety is of primary importance. Agency staff will not release information regarding a domestic abuse victim or their dependents to any outside party or county employee who is not directly involved in the client's case, except as required by law or as authorized in writing by the client. To avoid breaching confidentiality or compromising the family's safety, referrals made to other agencies or divisions (e.g., District Attorney-Public Assistance Division [DA-PAD]) must indicate the existence of domestic abuse.

Specialized case managers work with survivors to identify the most appropriate ways to meet their safety and confidentiality needs. To further ensure the family's safety, survivors may designate how they wish to receive communication from the Agency. Options include an alternate "safe" phone number or mailing address, PO Box, and hand delivery of county correspondence. A written statement signed by the survivor must be maintained in the case file documenting the need for and preferred alternate contact and correspondence method. Agency Staff are trained on safety and confidentiality in general during the IIT class. DASU SSWs are offered additional training offered through Children's and Family Services Division or community partner organizations that encompass topics that are related to DV safety such as A Safety Organized Approach to Domestic Violence/ Partnering with the Survivor training.

Lastly, the Agency encourages the use of Safe at Home (SAH). SAH is a free, confidential address and mail-forwarding service for domestic abuse, sexual assault, and stalking victims. The California Secretary of State's Office administers the program, which is intended to be used in conjunction with an overall safety plan. After enrollment in SAH, individuals are assigned a substitute PO Box and a unique four-digit ID number. After that, only the substitute SAH PO Box is to be used as the individual's home and mailing address. The individual's actual residence address is never entered into any computer system and must be kept in a secure location. In certain situations, domestic abuse victims may choose to change their identity legally.

6. How and when are clients informed of the availability of good cause for domestic abuse (program waivers)?

Please see Figure 24: Barrier Removal Noticing Table.

7. How does the CWD address mental health and/or substance abuse issues amongst children?

The Agency utilizes the OC Health Care Agency (HCA) to provide Mental Health and Substance Abuse services, including services to children when concerns/issues are disclosed by clients. HCA Children and Youth Services provides a broad range of services for behaviorally, emotionally, or mentally disordered children and adolescents which include evaluation, therapy, medication management, crisis intervention, and collateral services to parents and families. HCA Substance Use Prevention School-Based Program provides staff training, parent workshops, school-based curriculum, community education, and outreach to prevent alcohol and drug use.

As referenced in Section 3, Part 2, Question 2, mental health and/or substance use issues are identified and addressed by county and contracted staff throughout various stages of the program such as OCAT, FSA/FST, etc. Moreover, Mutual Clients are served by CalWORKs and CFS staff, and any Mental Health/Substance Abuse service needs are communicated immediately and services are coordinated and linked by CFS staff.

In addition to referring clients and children to HCA, the Agency also provides community resources to clients such as OC 211, Orange County Department of Education Mental Health, and Families and Communities Together (FaCT) to address mental and/or substance abuse issues amongst children.

Part 4. Working with Service Providers

1. Identify and describe: Primary service providers, whether contracted or not, whether the provision of this service is impacted, location in relation to population being served, and the service level offered (out-patient, in-patient, etc.).

At the moment, the only impacted service is the Housing Support Program (HSP). While there are enough staff and funds to serve all clients referred to HSP there are not enough landlords who are willing to lease to CalWORKs clients who frequently have poor credit, poor rental history, and whose income does not meet landlord requirements.

Contracted Providers:

- EQUUS
 - 100 E. Center St., Anaheim, CA 92805
 - Services Provided: Orientation, Job Search Readiness (JSR), Striving Towards Elevating Personal Success (STEPS), Unpaid Work Experience

- (EXPT), Subsidized Employment, Job Skills, GED Academy, Cell-Ed, Employment Support, Resource Room, etc.
 - Services provided directly through EQUUS
- MAXIMUS
 - Co-located at all CW Regions
 - Services provided directly through MAXIMUS
- Orange County Asian Pacific Community Alliance (OCAPICA)
 - 12912 Brookhurst St., Ste. 410, Garden Grove, CA 92840
 - Services Provided: Employment Support & Post-Aid Services
 - Services provided directly through OCAPICA
- Foster Assessment Center and Testing Services (FACTS)
 - Co-located at all CW Regions
 - Services Provided: Assessment provides client information regarding family, work history, education, skills, interests, aptitudes, cognitive level, grade level of ability, behavioral patterns, supportive services needed, etc.
 - Services provided directly through FACTS
- Family Resource Center (FRC) - Families and Community Together (FACT)
 - [FACT Orange County Locations](#)
 - 16 locations across Orange County
 - Services Provided: Family Stabilization
 - Each FRC is operated collaboratively by several agencies including hospitals, non-profits and cities.
- 1736 Family Crisis Center
 - 12391 Lewis Street, Suite 103, Garden Grove, CA 92840
 - Services Provided: Housing Support Program
 - Services provided directly through provider
- MECCA and First 5
 - 1505 E. 17th Street, Suite 230, Santa Ana, CA 92705
 - Services Provided: Home Visiting Program
 - Services provided directly through provider
- Health Care Agency (MOU)
 - 405 W. 5th Street, Santa Ana, CA 92701

- Services Provided: Behavioral Health Services and Substance Abuse Services
- Services provided through Public Health Nurse/BHS Counselors
- Anaheim/Santa Ana Workforce Development Board
 - Services Provided: Vocational Training, Workforce Experience
 - Services provided through various locations with employers
- Public Consulting Group (PCG)
 - [Public Consulting Group Offices](#)
 - Services Provided: Social Security Benefits Advocacy for disabled/exempt Clients
 - Services provided directly through provider
- Access California
 - 631 S. Brookhurst Street, Suite 107, Anaheim, CA 92804
 - Services Provided: Refugee Social Services
 - Services provided directly through provider

2. Are any barrier removal service providers co-located at CWD offices? If so describe.

All Agency CW/WTW offices have co-located barrier removal services providers.

Domestic Abuse Services: All Agency CW/WTW offices have Domestic Abuse Services Units (DASU). If a client discloses current or past domestic abuse to their assigned worker and agrees to be referred to DASU, the assigned worker completes a referral and sends it to the DASU unit.

Medical Services: The Agency and HCA established an agreement that enables Public Health Nurses (PHNs) to be co-located at all Agency CW/WTW offices. PHNs assist CalWORKs clients with overcoming medical barriers that may affect participation in WTW services. Clients who are mandatory or voluntary WTW participants (or who meet “Extraordinary Circumstances”) may obtain assistance with medical, developmental (for children), emotional, pregnancy, or substance use related concerns.

Behavioral Health Services: HCA-contracted providers are co-located at all Agency CW/WTW offices to assist clients with depression, anxiety, anger, grief, domestic violence, parenting issues, stress, trauma, drug/alcohol abuse, and other mental health or substance abuse issues. If a client is interested in behavioral health services, the caseworker refers the client to Behavioral Health Services.

Family Resource Centers: All Agency CW/WTW offices host a Family Resource Center (FRC) representative once a week. When a WTW participant is approved for Family Stabilization (FS) services, the case manager determines if the participant or their family could benefit from FRC services and makes a referral to the FRC with the participant's consent. The FRC representative interviews the client, explains available FRC services, and assists the client in connecting with services. All FRCs offer counseling, parenting education, Emergency Assistance, Domestic Violence PEP classes, and community resources and referrals. Some FRCs offer additional services such as nutrition workshops, military family support, and legal advocacy for survivors of domestic violence.

Children and Family Services: Children and Family Services (CFS) is one of four divisions in the Agency. All Agency CW/WTW offices are co-located with CFS staff to provide child safety and family economic stability services for Mutual Clients (clients who have an open CFS case or Child Abuse Registry (CAR) referral and have an open or pending CalWORKs case). The CFS social worker and the CalWORKs case manager work in collaboration to develop the Mutual Client's CFS case plan and WTW plan. Select Agency CW/WTW offices also have co-located CFS emergency response units.

Integrated Job Services: Integrated Job Services (IJS) are administered through EQUUS and Orange County Asian Pacific Islander Community Alliance (OCAPICA). EQUUS contracted staff are co-located at all Agency CW/WTW offices and provide WTW participants with assistance intended to increase a participant's ability to obtain or retain employment. IJS includes career assistance services and the provision of Work from Home equipment. EQUUS also aids with family basic needs, housing, domestic abuse services, and transportation. Case managers complete referrals on behalf of the WTW participant and EQUUS staff meet with the participant to explain and offer available services. Effective January 3, 2023, OCAPICA will provide Post Aid services to former CW/WTW participants.

3. How are other county-administered programs leveraged to serve barrier removal needs?

The Agency utilizes the OC Health Care Agency's (HCA) Behavioral Health Services division to provide counseling for clients in need of mental health, substance abuse, or behavior disorder support services. Additionally, HCA's Public Health division provides assistance through Public Health Nurses that assist clients with overcoming medical barriers.

The Agency has an existing partnership with OC Community Resources' Community services division through the OC Workforce Development Board to provide vocational training and paid work experience opportunities to WTW participants. Additionally, the

Agency partners with workforce development boards of Anaheim and Santa Ana's (the two largest cities in Orange County).

Lastly, the Agency has a limited partnership with the OC Office of Care Coordination in the form of warm referrals of clients with major barriers to housing such as CalWORKs households with disabled adults. Unfortunately, due to local housing prioritization rules, CalWORKs clients participating in HSP are considered served by a rapid rehousing program and are not considered for ongoing long-term housing opportunities such as Section 8 housing vouchers.

4. How are community partnerships leveraged to ensure clients are connected to appropriate services?

The Agency leverages relationships with other county agencies and partners such as Child Support Services, Health Care Agency, Department of Rehab, OC Housing Authority, Family Resource Centers, community colleges, and adult schools to streamline services and to identify additional resources when needed. For example, the Agency partners with Children's Home Society to ensure seamless transition for Stage 1 to Stage 2 child care.

We collaborate often by inviting these partners to provide presentations and attend collaborative meetings to educate and inform our staff of available services within our community as well as the processes to access those services. Conversely, the Agency's Community and Government Relations team participates in community hosted events, provides overviews of services by the Agency and assists in coordinating events with presentations by program SMEs. As a result of the Agency's emphasis on community education and outreach, CW/WTW program presentations are regularly provided to schools, religious institutions, affordable housing providers, external case managers, and other agencies.

In Orange County, all residents have access to 211OC, an online resource search tool with a corresponding call center for assistance. All Agency staff are encouraged to promote the use of the service for support locating resources such as housing, homeless resources, food donations, domestic abuse services, mental health, and other services when client needs are not fully met by CW/WTW.

All Orange County CW/WTW regional offices have resource rooms with free access to PCs and flyers/brochures with available community resources. Additionally, our contracted services providers are trained and expected to connect clients to community resources when services are not provided by the Agency or contractor by leveraging professional relationships with other partners.

Part 5. Staff Training

1. Does the CWD have specialized staff that work with clients with significant barriers?

Orange County has specialized units for Domestic Abuse, Family Stabilization, Mutual Clients, and Cal-Learn.

The Domestic Abuse Services Units (DASU) are comprised of Senior Social Workers (SSW), Specialized Case Managers (CM) and Intake/Continuing Employment and Eligibility Specialists (IEES/CEES). This specialized unit maintains close ongoing communication and collaboration to identify and deliver effective services necessary to address the sensitive needs of domestic abuse victims and their families. Participation in WTW activities is encouraged to the fullest extent of the individual's abilities.

Counseling and treatment programs, and/or other activities designed to address domestic abuse issues, enables the participant to move toward employment and self-sufficiency. The ability of, and extent to which, an individual is capable of participating in WTW activities will be based on an individual assessment completed by the DASU SSW, and re-evaluated during monthly contacts between the participant, DASU SSW, and DASU CM.

Waiver of certain CalWORKs and WTW program requirements can be allowed on a temporary, case-by-case basis, as long as the domestic abuse prevents the participant from obtaining employment or fully participating in WTW activities. When an individual, whose WTW plan includes participation in domestic abuse activities, fails or refuses to comply with requirements of the WTW program, the DASU CM will determine if good cause exists.

The Family Stabilization (FS) Specialized Units are comprised of CMs and IEESs/CEESs. The FS program is designed to ensure a basic level of stability within a family prior to, or concurrently with, participation in WTW activities. Individuals may participate in the FS program to overcome an emergency that is destabilizing their family and impairing their ability to participate in WTW. FS is a voluntary component of the WTW program intended to provide needed services and interventions to assist families facing crisis or difficult circumstances. A qualifying crisis or situation could be homelessness (or imminent risk of homelessness), domestic violence, and untreated or undertreated behavioral needs (mental health, substance abuse, child-related or parenting issues). FS participants will receive intensive case management support. The specialized CM will work closely with FS participants to evaluate the extent of the family's crisis or situation in order to provide appropriate and timely services and/or referrals to County and community-based resources.

The Mutual Client Specialized Units are comprised of FSS CMs, Children and Family Services CMs, CEEs, and CW Eligibility Technicians. Mutual Clients have both an open child welfare case or referral and an open or pending CalWORKs case. Collaboration between CFS and FSS ensures coordinated case planning necessary to assist Mutual Clients in overcoming interconnected issues such as poverty and child maltreatment. This is achieved through early identification of qualifying cases coupled with early coordination of services between CFS and FSS through attending Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings, ongoing communication and collaboration, and co-location of CalWORKs staff at CFS facility. Early coordination and collaboration are beneficial to both the Agency and Mutual Clients through reduced duplication of effort, more streamlined access to services, and consistent expectations for clients navigating the CalWORKs and Child Welfare systems.

The Cal-Learn Specialized Units are comprised of FSS CMs, Adolescent Family Life Program (AFLP) CMs, and CEEs. The purpose of the Cal-Learn Program is to reduce the chances of long-term welfare dependency by serving pregnant and custodial/parenting teen parents under the age of 19 who have not obtained a high school diploma or equivalent and are receiving CalWORKs. In Orange County, both the CWD Agency and the Health Care Agency (HCA) work closely together to administer the Cal-Learn program. Cal-Learn CMs provide assistance to teen parents to obtain the educational services necessary to earn a high school diploma or its equivalent, identify the need for and method of providing supportive services, develop a case plan to assist the teen parent to graduate from high school or its equivalent, and evaluate for program exemptions, deferrals, good cause, bonuses, and sanctions.

2. What types of training are provided?

Trainings on domestic abuse, substance abuse, mental health, and learning disabilities, are part of our in-house CalWORKs Intensive Induction Training, Case Manager Intensive Induction Training, and also part of CalWORKs 2.0 training. They include topics such as warning signs, patterns, victim body language, safety plans, intensive case management, and communicating with sensitivity.

These trainings are provided in-house as well as through guest speakers from our partners such as Foster Assessment, Behavioral Health Services, and Children and Family Services.

Please refer to the trainings discussed in Section 1, Part 3, Question 3 for additional information.

3. How are CWD staff trained to talk with clients about barrier removal services?

Caseworkers are instructed to talk with clients about barrier removal services through utilization of CalWORKs 2.0 Tools, motivational interviewing, OCAT Appraisal etc.

Specialized caseworkers working with clients with significant barriers receive additional training during the CalWORKs Intensive Inductive Training modules related to CW 2.0. This training addresses how to talk with clients about barrier removal services and submitting appropriate referrals.

Using OCAT, case managers conduct a high-level needs assessment and evaluate participants for potential barriers and make appropriate referral(s) for supportive/employment services and address barriers as identified. Conducting an interactive and productive Appraisal is part of Case Manager Intensive Induction Training curriculum.

4. What steps are taken to help staff manage secondary trauma/compassion fatigue?

All Orange County employees have access to the County's Employee Assistance Program which provides free, confidential benefits that can assist employees with personal or work-related problems before they adversely affect their health or job performance, including dealing with secondary trauma and compassion fatigue.

Prior to COVID-19, specialized case managers received formalized secondary trauma instruction. This workshop was facilitated by a subject matter expert on secondary trauma. The topics discussed included: identifying secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, a group discussion on case manager experiences with high barrier clients, and methods of self-care.

Section 4. Initial Engagement Analysis

Part 1. Initial Engagement Analysis

1. Compare performance to data baselines and, for process measures, to target thresholds (not applicable during first Cal-OAR process).

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

2. Identify any emerging trends in the measures. What inferences can be drawn?

Based on analysis of the Performance Measures Trend Report for Orientation Attendance Rate and OCAT/Appraisal Rate for the period of July 2021 through December 2021, and for First Activity Attendance Rate for the period of April 2021, through September 2021, Orange County's performance is as follows:

- The Orientation Attendance Rate was overall higher than statewide average, with a highest rate of 80.5% in July 2021 (30.1% higher than statewide average), and the lowest of 66.5% in October 2021 (12.2% higher than statewide average). From July 2021 to December 2021, Orange County's Orientation Attendance Rate (71.5% average) trended downward compared to the State's rate (53.4% average) which trended upward, peaking in September 2021.
- The OCAT/Appraisal Timeliness Rate was overall higher than statewide average, with a highest rate of 48.9% in October 2021 (23.9% higher than statewide average) and the lowest of 40.5% in December 2021 (17% higher than statewide average). From July 2021 to December 2021, Orange County's OCAT/Appraisal Timeliness Rate (44.1% average) increased and then returned to slightly below July's rate. The State's rate (25.4% average) initially increased; however, the rate began dropping below average in October 2021.
- The First Activity Attendance Rate was overall higher than statewide average, with a high of 82.7% in August 2021 (33.4% higher than statewide average) and a low of 67.0% in April 2021 (18.4% higher than statewide average). From April 2021 to September 2021, Orange County's First Activity Attendance Rate (74.8% average) trended upward. During the same period, the State's rate (48.2% average) dipped and returned slightly above April's rate.

3. What factors may have contributed to the CWD performance on these measures? Consider both strengths and challenges, both internal and external to the CWD.

Orange County has a long-standing commitment to quality improvement. In 2016, we implemented the “Early Engagement Project,” after a successful pilot in 2015, with the goal of improving our business processes and closing the gaps between CalWORKs approvals, Welfare-To-Work case assignment, and the scheduling of the Orientation and Appraisal Interviews. After the appointments are scheduled, case managers are responsible for confirming the availability of the client, issuing child care and/or ancillary. EQUUS follows up with a reminder phone call the day before Orientation.

Additionally, monthly report monitoring attributed to the increase of our Initial Engagement performance measures, CW/WTW administrators and supervisors regularly review reports to ensure clients are being connected to case managers and services promptly after CalWORKs approval. As a response to COVID-19, the Agency enhanced access to virtual Orientation, virtual OCAT/Appraisal Interviews, online activities, e-forms, and laptops which provided ample flexibility.

During our Caseworker Focus Group, the group identified transportation access, complex family needs, housing instability, and lack of reliable child care as primary concerns for meeting Initial Engagement goals.

While Orange County has bus transportation services, most clients use their cars. The Laguna Hills Regional Center faces more challenges as some of their clients live in remote areas that are not accessible to bus lines; therefore, other transportation methods, such as Uber/Lyft are offered on a case-by-case basis.

Multiple focus groups noted that clients often struggle to find reliable child care within a short period of time. Issues of overwhelming paperwork, the need for a “documented” child care provider, and selecting a close relative as a cultural preference to care for a child are all noted barriers.

The COVID-19 public health emergency created various challenges. Prior to the development of our pandemic response and operation safety plans, we experienced issues with contacting and engaging clients using virtual services due to lack of access to technology on behalf of the client; frequent changes in policies and interim directions; reductions in staffing due to illness and quarantine; and overall challenges with coordinating pandemic response and return to work plans with contracted providers.

4. Identify unmet needs and service gaps. Describe the CWD process for tracking and addressing these needs.

Findings from the Cal-CSA stakeholder meetings, focus groups, and data analysis consistently confirmed that our proactive approach to schedule and engage clients into initial WTW activities has led to above average outcomes for our clients.

Generally, gaps in services occurred due to challenges related to client readiness to engage such as unidentified transportation needs, lack of reliable child care, and the need for a holistic family assessment and services. Additionally, communication enhancements between WTW case managers, contracted staff, and clients were noted as an opportunity for improvement. Refer to Section 4, Part 1, Question 3 of this self-assessment for more information about the Agency's process for tracking and addressing these needs.

The existing process of early engagement seems to be effective in ensuring immediate initial engagement in WTW activities. Another business practice that has assisted these performance measures is an internal report called Un-assigned Caseloads generated by our Client Engagement System which tracks WTW cases in real-time to ensure assignment within one (1) business day. Supervisors at each region monitor this report to ensure cases are assigned promptly.

5. Identify changes or data trends since the last Cal-OAR process (not applicable during first Cal-OAR cycle). What impact does this have on service delivery and availability of services?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

Part 2. Demographic Analysis

1. Do disparities amongst different subpopulations exist?

The Cal-OAR Team analyzed the Orientation Attendance Rate and the OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate performance measures using data from July 2021 to December 2021. The First Activity Attendance Rate performance measure was analyzed using data from April 2021 to September 2021.

For the purposes of this assessment, the Cal-OAR Team highlighted any disparity of five (5) percentage points or more from the aggregate six-month rate. Due to data de-identification, data was unavailable for some of the review months.

Orientation Attendance Rate: No disparities were observed when analyzing data by age, case type, language, race/ethnicity, or WTW Program Status.

OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate: Disparities were observed when analyzing data by language. No disparities were observed when analyzing data by age, case type, race/ethnicity, or WTW program status.

- Language: The OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rates of clients whose primary languages are Spanish (35.9%) and “Other Languages” (33.8%) were 8.2% and 10.3% lower, respectively, than the aggregate six-month rate of 44.1%.

First Activity Attendance Rate: No disparities were observed when analyzing data by age, case type, language, race/ethnicity, or WTW program status.

The Cal-OAR Team has not identified any contributing factors to the rate variations in the populations listed above. The Cal-OAR Team will continue to explore systemic causes of and contributing factors to disparities and develop meaningful strategies to address them throughout the Cal-CQI process.

2. Are there disparities between the population being served, the services provided, and the services available in the community (either CWD provided or services available in the community)?

All Orange County CW/WTW clients are engaged in initial activities and are assessed for barriers and connected to barrier removal services when appropriate. The Agency has many established policies and procedures in place to ensure services are provided to all clients in an equitable way. To ensure consistency and accountability, case and quality assurance review processes are in place to detect any issues. There are no known identified disparities between the services provided by the Agency; however, there may be variations between the services available at each of the CW/WTW offices, based on capacity and the need of the population being served.

Further assessment will be needed to conduct a comparative analysis between initial activities offered by the Agency and the services available in the community. Additionally, further assessment of data and discussion will be conducted to investigate and determine if disparities exist among various measures and subpopulations

3. What effort has the CWD made to address these disparities? Explain what barriers have arisen while addressing the disparities.

The Agency's goal is to reduce observed disparities, provide equitable services to all populations, empower communities, and promote equitable outcomes. The Cal-OAR Team will continue to explore systemic causes of and contributing factors to any identified disparities and develop meaningful strategies to address them throughout the Cal-CQI process.

4. How may the results inform Cal-SIP strategies?

Following the submission of the Cal-CSA, the Cal-OAR Team will be closely analyzing individual level data available through the Cal-OAR19 reports and will discuss emerging themes from the Cal-CSA and additional research with focus groups and partners.

Part 3. Outcome Analysis

1. What other performance measures might impact these measures?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

2. How have implemented strategies from the previous Cal-OAR process impacted performance?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

3. What were successes and challenges from previous Cal-OAR process?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

4. What previous Cal-SIP strategies might the county consider building upon in the next Cal-SIP period?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

Part 4. System Analysis

1. Further assessment by the CWD of its service delivery system and mechanisms.

Upon CalWORKs approval, the WTW case must be transferred and assigned to a case manager within one (1) business day. The assigned regional clerk will monitor the designated mailbox and assign WTW cases and schedule participants for Orientation and Appraisal appointments within three (3) business days.

Clerical staff verify case manager availability, check the CalWORKs Orientation Sign-in Sheet provided by EQUUS, and review region-specific posted Orientation Schedules, which include the participant language.

Upon assignment of the WTW case, the case manager will receive a softcopy of the WTW Appointment Letter (WTW 9) from the regional clerk, calendar the scheduled appointment in Outlook, update Case Comments as appropriate, call the participant to introduce themselves, and notify the participant of the scheduled appointment. Rescheduling is available and will be offered if either the case manager or client are unavailable. Case managers are required to call the participant one (1) day prior to the scheduled appointment.

Supervisors update the Regional case manager calendar, utilized by the regional clerk to schedule Appraisal appointments, indicating when case managers have approved time off. Supervisors are also responsible for monthly report monitoring to ensure clients are being connected to case managers and services promptly after CalWORKs approval. Additionally, the Trigger and Weekly Engagement reports show the number of days clients have yet to be engaged or under-engaged.

During COVID-19, case managers started to schedule their own appointments upon assignment of the WTW case. However, this change will be revisited by the Divisional Operations Team after the CalSAWS implementation.

2. Describe the process for providing a full-time child care authorization to client (including vouchers, payment, tracking, etc.).

CalWORKs Clients have access to Stage One (County provided) immediate and continuous full-time child care for 12 consecutive months upon being approved for cash aid if they have an age eligible child. A client is eligible to receive immediate and continuous full-time (unless part-time is specifically requested) child care anytime the

client is expected to be referred to WTW, is employed, is required to participate, or is participating in an Agency-approved WTW/Cal-Learn activity or activities.

CW applicants and recipients are given the CalWORKs Stage One Child Care Informing Notice and Request Form (CCP7) at the time of application, prior to or during appraisal, when the WTW Plan is signed, at each annual redetermination, and anytime they express a need for child care.

When a client requests child care either in writing or verbally, the caseworker will provide a Child Care Packet for either a licensed provider or non-licensed provider. The clients are given 15 days to return the Child Care Packet. The Child Care Packet needs to be completed by the client, child care provider, and the Agency caseworker. Once the packet is received from the client, the caseworker is required to process the packet within 10 days. The caseworker will review the Child Care Packet to ensure all documents are received and completed correctly. If needed, the caseworker may need to reach out to the client or provider for clarification. If by the 30th day the Child Care Packet is not received, a Child Care Denial NOA is sent to the client. DocuSign eSignature technology has been utilized to ensure required signatures for child care forms are received in a convenient and fast way.

Once the Child Care Packet is returned, it is reviewed and approved or denied by the caseworker and supervisor. If denied, the client and child care provider will be sent Denial NOAs. If approved, the client and provider will be sent approval NOAs and a copy of the approved Child Care Plan.

The client will also receive a few copies of the Reimbursement Report Form (CCP 2145 - once CalSAWS goes live, CalSAWS will automatically send the CCP 2145 to the client monthly). The CCP 2145 must be submitted for a child care payment to be made. The client will work with the provider to get the reimbursement forms completed and submitted, it is the responsibility of the client and provider to submit the forms timely.

The CCP 2145 Forms are due by the 5th working day of the month following the month care was provided (but can always be submitted any time after the month). Child care payments are processed within 20 calendar days after receipt (unless anything needs to be corrected or verified). Payments are made for the time the child is in care while the parent is working or in an approved WTW activity and there is an approved Child Care Plan in the system. However, if the child(ren) does not attend but the provider stipulates on their rate sheet or on the Child Care Plan that payment is required regardless of attendance, the Agency will pay the provider. Providers are paid based on their rates or the Regional Market Rate (RMR) whichever is less.

The Agency does not provide vouchers for child care assistance. The Agency pays the child care provider directly. The child care payment is mailed to the provider in form of a

check (warrant). The client will also be mailed the approval notice each time a child care payment is issued.

CalWORKs Stage One Child Care promotes parental choice when choosing a child care provider with options that include center-based care, family day care homes, and license-exempt providers. The client can stop and change providers at any time; a new Child Care Plan is required if the provider changes. Retroactive payments are limited to no more than 30 days prior to the change of providers. Once a client is stable, they are referred to the Children's Home Society or Orange County Department of Education for transfer to Stage 2 or 3 child care (local child care Alternative Payment Providers). Child care services are to be seamless, with no break, during the transition between the three (3) stages of child care.

The access to immediate and continuous child care for clients helps with the early engagement process, especially engaging with a WTW activity promptly. The Agency also provides short-term child care services for WTW clients to attend Orientation and Appraisal. Short-term child care can be approved for up to sixteen (16) hours per request and as many times as needed if the client meets eligibility requirements. Upon receiving a request for short term child care from the client, the caseworker contacts the client, explains the eligibility criteria, the procedure for obtaining payment, refers the client, or assists them by contacting the dedicated CHS child care hotline for child care provider referral assistance as appropriate. Clients must provide a copy of the Provider's valid ID and completed W-9 for child care approval and reimbursement.

Throughout the Initial Engagement process, caseworkers communicate with clients to discuss and assess their needs for reasonable accommodations and supportive services ensuring access to all available resources.

3. How does the CWD ensure transportation needs are addressed for clients to attend Orientation and Appraisal?

During Initial Engagement, case managers discuss and assess participant needs for reasonable accommodations and advanced supportive services such as transportation, ensuring that the participant has the resources available to participate in the Orientation and Appraisal/Re-appraisal interview.

The case manager provides options for available transportation modes such as bus pass or mileage reimbursement if client chooses to use their own vehicle for the Orientation and Appraisal appointments. Parking costs incurred by the client while using his/her car when attending WTW activities are reimbursable at actual cost. Youth bus pass and transportation for children to and from child care providers are available supportive services as well.

The Agency uses a collaborative approach to ensure transportation is available for clients prior to the start of the activity. The collaborative team includes case managers, eligibility workers, and accountant assistants. The existing standardized process with established deadlines utilizes the Client Engagement System to submit transportation requests and to ensure timely processing of these requests.

Clients are able to receive bus passes through mail or in-office pick up. Postal delivery timeframes are considered when mailing out bus passes. No known barriers have been observed or documented regarding this process.

Clients who choose to drive their own car or who borrow a vehicle to get to and from their WTW activity, when public transportation is available, and the round-trip travel time to the WTW activity exceeds a total of two-hours on public transportation, will be authorized mileage reimbursement at the established per mile rate. The mileage reimbursement payments are intended to cover the car owner's per mile cost of gas, oil changes, batteries, tires, other routine maintenance, car insurance, and license and registration fees.

Even though there are options for mass transit through OCTA Bus and train (Metrolink and Amtrak), the significant factors affecting the lack of interest in transit use are poor connectivity, declining transit service levels, eroding transit service quality, and rising fares. A couple of our regional offices face more challenges as some of their clients live in remote areas that are not accessible to bus lines; however, all efforts are made by staff to ensure clients are provided reasonable transportation services. For example, using blended transportation modes such as approving the use of Taxi or alternative services (Uber/Lyft) in combination with bus passes for clients living off service areas.

Since the onset COVID-19, Orientation is available over the phone or in a virtual group setting. For Appraisal, case managers are conducting phone interviews to complete the Online CalWORKs Assessment Tool (OCAT).

4. General Measure Analysis

The Orientation is a 60-minute session that includes information on available services and activities, as well as a review of the contents in the WTW Handbook. The Orientation is enhanced by visual aids, audience participation, and a question-and-answer session.

There are many Orientation sessions available throughout the day to ensure that all participants can attend as part of their WTW Appraisal process. A one-on-one Orientation will be provided if a client cannot participate in any of the scheduled sessions. The Orientation is conducted in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese, as needed. The Agency's

language line services are utilized whenever clients can benefit from a different language, including sign language.

The Orientation is delivered by EQUUS, for groups as small as one (1) and no larger than 25 attendees. The Orientation room is equipped with visual aids and other equipment to enhance the interactive nature of the presentation. Beginning with the onset of COVID-19, Orientation is now available virtually and over the phone, which makes it easier for clients to attend. Clients receive two opportunities to have the Orientation rescheduled until the Non-Compliance Process is initiated.

Clients attend Orientation when WTW is first approved, a WTW exemption expires, when curing a WTW sanction, or when deemed appropriate by the case manager.

The Continuing Employment and Eligibility Specialist (CEES) will send participants to Orientation when a sanctioned individual agrees to cure their WTW sanction before their face-to-face interview to discuss the benefits of the WTW program.

Participants are asked to provide information about their employment history, education, skills, the need for supportive services, and any other relevant details utilizing the Self-Appraisal form (F063-41-03). The information obtained from the Self-Appraisal form may be used to help facilitate the OCAT Appraisal/Re-Appraisal interview. All information gathered from the interview will be used to assess and assign appropriate WTW activities and services, as well as identifying any barriers to self-sufficiency.

Upon completing the OCAT Appraisal/Re-Appraisal interview, the case managers review and evaluate the Appraisal Summary and Recommendations Report (ASR) to make appropriate referral(s) for supportive services, employment services, and address barriers as identified. Next, barrier removal services and benefits to receiving services are explained to the client. Then, referrals are completed for services accepted by the client.

Case managers can utilize any of the CalWORKs 2.0 tools available to assist them in creating a WTW Plan based on a thorough understanding of the client's strengths, barriers, interests, and needs as a family and then aligning the assigned activities appropriately. The case manager will engage the clients through various activities that will assist them in the transition from CW/WTW and maximize their potential for success. Case managers work with individual clients on developing attainable personalized WTW Plans and market activities in a way that align with their goals.

Part 5. Practice Changes to Consider

1. Why are measures in this programmatic grouping being considered?

Based on the Agency's research and analysis of focus group feedback, CDSS Cal-OAR Dashboard performance measures, and internal sources, Orange County will likely be considering Orientation Attendance Rate, OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate, and First Activity Attendance Rate, or any combination of these programmatic grouping measures and Ongoing Engagement performance measures.

While Orange County performance is strong in both grouping measures, the Cal-OAR Team has identified that there is room for improvement in caseworker training, barrier removal services, and WTW engagement and activity sequencing.

The Agency plans on closely examining all processes related to getting CalWORKs families into a healthy state of mind with most, if not all needs met, and creating more thorough, thoughtful, and tailored paths to self-sufficiency. The Cal-OAR Team hypothesizes that improvements in these areas will lead to better education and employment outcomes for Orange County CW/WTW families with long-term sustained self-sufficiency. Additionally, the Cal-OAR Team will concurrently be studying strong and underperforming sub demographic groups to identify additional opportunities for improvement and drivers of success, as well as program re-entries.

2. Or, why aren't measures in this programmatic grouping being considered?

N/A

3. Are there best or promising practices that can be applied? What literature, data, or other information supports the practice?

Strategies for Engaging Adults in Welfare-to-Work Activities

Catherine M. Vu, Elizabeth K. Anthony, and Michael J. Austin, 2009

[Report PDF hosted by UC Berkeley Mack Center](#)

One study in California (Vu, Anthony, & Austin, 2009) found that more in-depth assessments are needed to detect complex barriers to employment (e.g., mental health issues, drug and alcohol addictions, domestic violence, or learning problems). Once identified, clinical diagnoses and treatment plans are created so that participants receive appropriate services. Kauff and colleagues (2004) found that participants can be

screened by specialists to assess for specific barriers either during orientation or case-planning interviews. Specialists then report back to the case manager with a comprehensive evaluation. Thorough assessments are needed for the development of individualized service plans for hard-to-employ participants. Case managers play an important role in individualized case planning by helping participants develop employment plans to move them from welfare to work. Kauff et al. (2004) found that programs that sought to engage all participants in work activities used three approaches to create employment plans to meet the needs of participants: (a) a work-focused, participant-centered approach to case management; (b) regular and frequent contact with participants; and (c) formal processes for encouraging progress toward self-sufficiency.

Framing the Message: Using Behavioral Economics to Engage TANF Recipients

Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) Report, 2016

Mary Farrell, Jared Smith, Leigh Reardon, Emmi Obara

[Report PDF hosted by Administration for Children & Families](#)

This report reviews findings pertaining to the reengagement of CalWORKs clients in the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). Three groups of clients who lost their welfare-to-work exemption status were randomly selected to study the effect that sending out one additional informing notice (aside from the required informing notices) would have on the level of participant reengagement. One group received a notice from DPSS highlighting the benefits they may gain by attending their reengagement appointment, one group was sent a notice highlighting the losses participants might experience by not attending the appointment, and the third group (the control group) did not receive any additional material.

The study found that the group that received the letter highlighting the potential losses had a higher rate of engagement within 30 days of their scheduled appointment whereas the group receiving the letter highlighting the potential gain did not produce a statistically significant increase compared to the control group (Farrell et al., 2016).

Although the research indicated that the increase in engagement only had an effect for approximately 30 days (at 60 days, there were no statistically relevant differences in participation between the control group and the groups which received letters), this research provides insight into the importance of additional measures to promote engagement. The return to baseline at 60 days may be an indication that more intervention may be needed to sustain increased ongoing engagement.

4. If changes have been made to improve performance in the past, what were the changes, and the associated results?

As discussed in detail throughout Section 4, the Agency attributes our success in the Initial Engagement performance measures to the implementation of the Early Engagement Project (designed to reduce amount of time between CalWORKs approval and WTW Orientation/Appraisal) and our ongoing efforts to ensure clients are being engaged as quickly as possible by utilizing our Client Engagement System (CES) to identify unassigned and under-engaged clients.

As a result, Orange County ranks among the top three (3) counties for these performance measures.

5. Would a Peer Review be helpful in addressing challenges in this area?

Yes, Orange County is interested in collaborating with counties with strong performance in this category.

Part 6. Partner and Collaborator Feedback

1. Partner and Collaborator feedback and results provided on the programmatic grouping of measures.

Focus groups using small group discussions and brainstorming sessions were held in the months of August and September 2022 to provide an opportunity for eligibility workers, case managers, and EQUUS to provide input regarding their experience with Initial Engagement services and activities. Partners and collaborators noted the following key themes:

- The need for conducting holistic family assessment for all family members to increase the level of engagement and remove barriers. Families face complex issues and many socio-economic and cultural challenges that need initial root issues analysis and ongoing support
- Focus group participants identified challenges of working with clients who are swiftly connected to services and activities without completing and obtaining proper documentation
- Recommendation to increase case manager training to build skills in detecting distress in families and to increase awareness of resources and services available to qualifying families

- Supportive services are not always in place prior to start of activities. Focus groups participants noted lack of child care placement, reliable transportation, and homelessness as significant barriers to maintain WTW appointments
- Meaningful and early engagement should be a priority rather than merely assigning activities very quickly. The complexity of some cases requires more of an in-depth root-cause analysis and coordinating services to address issues beyond participation requirements
- Case managers who practice healthy flexibility and empower participants through motivational interviewing techniques seemed to have a positive impact on clients

2. Describe how Partner and Collaborator feedback results influenced the measure analysis.

As noted throughout Section 4, Orange County's strong performance in this performance measure group can be attributed to the Early Engagement Project (designed to reduce amount of time between CalWORKs approval and WTW Orientation/Appraisal). The implementation of this project is correlated with a decrease in missed appointments, faster engagement rates, and more supportive coordination for case managers and clients. Findings from the focus groups confirmed the effectiveness of the Early Engagement Project and highlighted additional opportunities.

During the focus groups, participants confirmed that reminders the day prior to scheduled appointments and ensuring access to child care and transportation are correlated with positive trends in performance. Additionally, participants noted that successful supportive services authorizations in early appointments led to better performance in other activities.

A critical step in case management is the assessment of client and family needs. Participants noted an increase of clients who are not appropriate for the level of initial activities assigned and needed higher levels of initial root cause analysis and holistic family-centered care approach.

CalWORKs families tend to require higher upfront services to address engagement barriers caused by history of unsuccessful participation, behavioral health/substance abuse, homelessness, lack of motivation, domestic abuse, high stress, and living in poverty.

Initial interactions and engagements are essential opportunities for case managers to build a connection with clients. To ensure strong relationships early on, case managers need to implement strengths-based case management and work with clients to identify individual and family assets and strengths.

Focus group participants noted that home visits can be a great opportunity to assess issues, strengths, and resources, that may not emerge in an office setting.

3. Did Partners and Collaborators agree with the measures selected for targeted improvement strategies? If not, describe the different perspective.

The Agency has not finalized any targeted improvement strategies as of the writing of the Cal-CSA. Ongoing discussion and efforts are needed to identify targeted performance measures in the coming months. However, partners and collaborators agreed on the observed themes and recommendations provided in this section. More in-depth review and analysis will be conducted throughout Spring 2023 to identify targeted areas for improvements.

Section 5. Ongoing Engagement Analysis

Part 1. Ongoing Engagement Analysis

1. Compare performance to data baselines and, for process measures, to target thresholds.

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

2. Identify any emerging trends in the measures. What inferences can be drawn?

Based on the analysis of the Performance Measures Trend Report for the period of April 2021 through September 2021 for Engagement Rate and for the period of July 2021 through December 2021 for Sanction Rate and Sanction Resolution Rate, Orange County's performance is as follows:

- The Engagement Rate was overall higher than statewide average, with a highest rate of 49.7% in May 2021 (28.2% higher than statewide average), and the lowest of 43.1% in July 2021 (24% higher than statewide average). From April 2021 to September 2021, Orange County's Engagement Rate (45.6% average) trended slightly downward compared to the State's rate (21% average) which showed minimal variation during the same period.
- The Sanction Rate was overall higher than statewide average, with a highest rate of 17.5% in December 2021 (5.6% higher than statewide average) and the lowest of 12.3% in November 2021 (2.2% higher than statewide average). From July 2021 to December 2021, Orange County's Sanction Rate (14.2% average) showed minimal variation until December 2021 when it rose to 17.5%. The State's rate (10.6% average) trended slightly upward during the same period.
- The Sanction Resolution Rate was overall higher than statewide average, with a highest of 15% in September 2021 (7.3% higher than statewide average) and the lowest of 11.7% in December 2021 (3% higher than statewide average). From July 2021 to December 2021, Orange County's Sanction Resolution Rate (13.1% average) initially increased for two months and then slightly decreased for the remainder of the period. Aside from a lower-than-average rate of 6.2% in August 2021, the State's rate (7.5% average) showed minimal variation.

3. What factors may have contributed to the CWD performance on these measures? Consider both strengths and challenges, both internal and external to the CWD.

Orange County has implemented several strategies in recent years to increase the WTW Engagement Rate, create proactive processes to reduce the Sanction Rate, and increase the Work Participation Rate.

CW/WTW caseworkers are encouraged to follow proactive approaches to engaging non-participants such as creating a safe environment to discuss barriers, emphasizing client choice, empowering clients to develop their own solutions, collaborating with partners, and building high-trust relationships.

The Agency also utilizes the Client Engagement System which provides regular reports detailing unassigned cases as well as unengaged and under-engaged clients. With this information, administrators and supervisors work with case managers to ensure that client outreach is appropriately prioritized.

The most substantial change in service delivery during this period was the rapid transition to virtual platforms during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Services were quickly moved online or conducted by phone to meet State and County mandated stay-at-home orders. While this rapid transition was not without challenges for both Agency staff and clients, it was necessary to ensure the continuation of services with minimal disruption.

4. Identify unmet needs and service gaps. Describe the CWD process for tracking and addressing these needs.

Currently, barriers to WTW Engagement are evaluated throughout various stages of the program such as Intake Application, OCAT/Appraisal, WTW Plan development, and throughout ongoing interactions with clients. Additionally, supportive services are often offered and made available prior to the start of WTW activities.

Agency policies and procedures support proactive engagement of existing participants and re-engagement of sanctioned individuals by providing clients with education related to the benefits of WTW participation, highlighting the disadvantages of being sanctioned, and creating multiple opportunities and touchpoints for clients to express interest in WTW participation.

Findings from our focus groups noted opportunities in the following areas:

- Gaps in Communications. Due to the size of the Agency and complex challenges faced by clients, communication may not be as effective as it could be. This creates challenges for first-time clients navigating through program requirements and working with various staff (caseworkers, IJS providers, and barrier removal service contacts). Focus group participants noted that communication has been improving with Agency staff through the increase in ongoing meetings and collaborative problem-solving practices.
- Focus group participants noted that staff who are skilled at engaging clients in utilizing strength-based approaches, demonstrating empathy, and using powerful stories to motivate clients are more effective in leading and navigating them through CW/WTW program stages. The Agency is looking to enhance these skills with additional case manager training.
- Gaps in connections to proper activities. Participants noted that proper educational activities, short-term vocational training, and certificate programs for in-demand jobs lead to higher motivation in clients, while lack of options in these areas lead to higher rates of disengagement due to lack of interest.
- There are challenges often related to readiness to access services by clients due to transportation (cost and accessibility due to traveling long distance using public transport) and lack of appropriate child care options.

5. Identify changes or data trends since the last Cal-OAR process (not applicable during first Cal-OAR cycle). What impact does this have on service delivery and availability of services?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

Part 2. Demographic Analysis

1. Do disparities amongst different subpopulations exist?

The Cal-OAR Team analyzed the Sanction Rate and Sanction Resolution Rate performance measures using data from July 2021 to December 2021. The Engagement Rate performance measure was analyzed using data from April 2021 to September 2021.

For the purposes of this assessment, the Cal-OAR Team highlighted any disparity of five (5) percentage points or more from the aggregate six-month rate. Due to data de-identification, data was unavailable for some of the review months.

Engagement Rate: Disparities were observed when analyzing data by age and case type. No disparities were observed when analyzing data by language, race, or WTW program status.

- Age: The Engagement Rate of clients under the age of 20 (10.8%) was 34.8% lower than the six-month aggregate rate of 45.6%.
- Case Type: The six-month Engagement Rate of clients in the “Unidentified” case type subgroup (26.2%) was 19.4% lower than the six-month aggregate rate of 45.6%.

Sanction Rate: Disparities were observed when analyzing data by case type and race. No disparities were observed when analyzing data by age or language.

- Case Type: The six-month Sanction Rate of clients in the “Unidentified” case type subgroup (81.3%) was 67.1% higher than the six-month aggregate rate of 14.2%.
- Race/Ethnicity: The Sanction Rate of Native American/Pacific Islander clients (24.9%) was 10.7% higher than the aggregate six-month sanction rate of 14.2%.

Sanction Resolution Rate: Disparities were observed when analyzing data by case type and sanctioned type. No disparities were observed when analyzing data by age, language, and race.

- Case Type: The six-month Sanction Resolution Rate for clients in the “Unidentified” case type subgroup (6.9%) was 6.2% lower than the six-month aggregate rate of 13.1%.
- Sanctioned Type: The Sanction Resolution Rate of clients in the “Long-Term Sanction” subgroup (5.6%) was 7.5% lower than the six-month aggregate of 13.1%.

The Cal-OAR Team has not identified any contributing factors to the rate variations in the populations listed above. The Cal-OAR Team will continue to explore systemic causes of and contributing factors to disparities and develop meaningful strategies to address them throughout the Cal-CQI process.

2. Are there disparities between the population being served, the services provided, and the services available in the community (either CWD provided or services available in the community)?

All Orange County CW/WTW clients are engaged in employment and/or educational activities and are assessed for barriers and connected to barrier removal services when

appropriate. The Agency has many established policies and procedures in place to ensure services are provided to all clients in an equitable way. To ensure consistency and accountability, case and quality assurance review processes are in place to detect any issues. There are no known disparities between the services provided by the Agency, however, there may be variations between the services available at each of the CW/WTW offices based on capacity and the needs of the populations being served.

Further assessment will be needed to conduct a comparative analysis between engagement activities offered by the Agency and the services available in the community. Additionally, further assessment of data and discussion will be conducted to investigate and determine if disparities exist among various measures and subpopulations.

3. What effort has the CWD made to address these disparities? Explain what barriers have arisen while addressing the disparities.

The Agency's goal is to reduce observed disparities, provide equitable services to all populations, empower communities, and promote equitable outcomes. The Cal-OAR Team will continue to explore systemic causes of and contributing factors to any identified disparities and develop meaningful strategies to address them throughout the Cal-CQI process.

4. How may the results inform Cal-SIP strategies?

Following the submission of the Cal-CSA, the Cal-OAR Team will be closely analyzing individual level data available through the Cal-OAR 19 reports and will discuss emerging themes from the Cal-CSA and additional research with focus groups and partners.

Part 3. Outcome Analysis

1. What other performance measures might impact these measures?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

2. How have implemented strategies from the previous Cal-OAR process impacted performance?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

3. What were successes and challenges from previous Cal-OAR process?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

4. What previous Cal-SIP strategies might the county consider building upon in the next Cal-SIP period?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

Part 4. System Analysis

1. Further assessment by the CWD of its service delivery system and mechanisms.

The Agency prioritizes consistent and timely communication to CW/WTW caseworkers related to program changes, operational updates, and best practices through the use of email, SharePoint, and regular meetings. Administrative staff maintain a comprehensive library of policies, processing guides, program updates, fillable forms, Worker Tools, and desk guides to assist caseworkers in performing job functions. Program questions are vetted by regional second level supervisors and submitted to the Policy and Quality Assurance Team to provide policy interpretation and guidance to facilitate responsive service delivery to clients.

The Agency utilizes the Case Accuracy Review System (CARS) which provides supervisors and managers with quality assurance tools to review case actions and provide actionable feedback to workers. Moreover, the Agency utilizes an in-house ancillary system, Client Engagement System (CES). CES was created as part of the Early Engagement Project to aid caseworkers, supervisors, and administrators in identifying unassigned cases as well as unengaged and under-engaged clients.

2. General Measure Analysis

Case managers are trained to better engage clients, specifically around the WTW Plan and assigning activities. Initial case planning includes completing an interview and a WTW orientation within five (5) business days from first contact with clients. During the initial interview, case managers are required to complete the Appraisal interview, review the WTW Handbook, assess for domestic abuse, behavioral/mental health issues, physical disabilities, and other barriers that may preclude clients from participating in WTW activities.

As needed, case managers are required to initiate referrals for services to specialized units, contracted providers, and community-based organizations. Partnerships for barrier removal and resources include IJS, Domestic Abuse Services Unit, Family Stabilization, Foster Assessment, food banks, shelters, HSP, HVP, Housing Authority, and Family Resource Centers among others.

The following county-initiated tools have been developed to assist with case management and maintenance:

- Medical Exemption Processing Flow Chart
- WTW Non-Compliance Process Flowchart
- Scheduling WTW Appraisal Appointments Processing Guide
- WTW Engagement and Sanction Re-Engagement Processing Guide
- WTW Trigger Report via CES Processing Guide

Domestic Abuse:

All mandatory and voluntary clients who disclose the existence of past or current domestic abuse are referred to domestic abuse services (DASU). After accepting the services, clients are referred to specialized staff for individual assessment and development of a WTW Plan suitable to their situation without putting the family in further risk.

A Domestic Abuse Waiver (DAW) of certain CW/WTW program requirements is allowed on a temporary, case-by-case basis, but only as long as the domestic abuse prevents the client from obtaining employment or fully participating in WTW activities.

Participation in WTW is encouraged to the fullest extent of the individual's abilities. Counseling and treatment programs and other activities designed to address domestic abuse issues are provided to the client which enables them to move towards employment and self-sufficiency. WTW Plans for survivors of domestic abuse are tailored to meet the needs of the individual and modified as necessary to reflect their ability to participate. While developing a WTW Plan, primary consideration is given to the safety and confidentiality of the survivor and their family and the degree to which domestic abuse is a barrier to their employment. Individuals who are assigned to DASU or are granted a DAW are eligible to receive all supportive services necessary to comply with the terms of their WTW Plan.

If the client's situation is stable enough to transition to regular WTW activities, a new WTW Plan is developed to reflect full hourly participation in new WTW activity. If needed, a Family Support Assessment (formerly known as MDT) meeting may be convened.

Family Stabilization:

All mandatory and voluntary clients who are experiencing a destabilizing crisis or situation are offered and referred to Family Stabilization (FS). If a client accepts services, case managers complete a referral and transfer the case to a specialized case manager for program evaluation and case maintenance. Within three (3) business days from receiving the FS referral, the specialized case manager evaluates and assesses for a WTW exemption or domestic abuse waiver, prior to evaluating for FS good cause.

If the family is referred to an FRC through FS, the case manager will participate in the FRC Case Management Team (CMT) meeting or invite the FRC Family Support Advocate to the County Family Support Assessment meeting. The CMT meeting is a weekly multidisciplinary team meeting to assess the family's strengths and needs and to provide linkages and referrals for community services.

When making a determination to discontinue FS services, the case manager considers all available information including, but not limited to, the family's safety and stability, the participant's progress in assigned FS services and activities, and the degree to which the crisis or situation may continue to impact the participant's ability to meet WTW requirements.

Once a client has met the FS Plan goals, a WTW Plan is developed. The FS case is transferred from a specialized caseload to a regular caseload and a FS Discontinuance NOA is issued to the client informing them about the FS Case closure.

Behavioral Health Services (BHS):

Case managers evaluate the need for BHS at Appraisal or at any other point during participation in WTW to ensure that proper support is being offered. Based on the evaluation, if a client is determined to have a mental health and/or substance abuse issues, the case manager develops a WTW Plan based on the results of the evaluation. The plan will include appropriate treatment and rehabilitation activities, employment accommodations, restrictions, and the supportive services necessary to overcome barriers to employment. The plan may also include assignment to a substance abuse treatment program.

Department of Rehabilitation:

Mandatory and voluntary participants are referred to the State Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) if they are identified as having a learning disability, identified as having a physical or mental impairment, or are receiving BHS and would benefit from DOR participation.

Case managers collaborate with Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors at DOR throughout the process. If approved, a WTW Plan is developed including the DOR activities and any concurrent WTW activities. If DOR referral is denied, case managers explore other options as appropriate.

CalWORKs Home Visiting Program (HVP):

Clients who meet the eligibility criteria for HVP are offered service during intake, appraisal, annual redetermination, and any other contact where family needs are discussed. If services are accepted, caseworkers initiate a referral to the contracted service provider. The contractor then:

- Attempts to contact the client within five (5) business days of receipt of referral and attempts to schedule a face-to-face or virtual meeting within fifteen (15) business days of receiving referral
- Identifies any immediate, emergency needs and provides linkages to resources that will address needs, and ensures linkages are successful
- Assesses family needs and develops individual case plans inclusive of clear, measurable goals and outcomes directly connected to CDSS and HomVEE guidelines
- Creates a case management plan which includes assessing the family's needs, developing an individualized case plan, monitoring progress in achieving case plan objectives, and ensuring the provision of all services specified in the case plan. The case plan should build on the strengths established during the home visiting period and the family's associated connections to child care. Case plans identify Material Goods needed by the participating families
- Collaborates with Agency staff, other County agencies, and community-based organizations to provide a holistic approach to service provision

The WTW Plan for mandatory clients enrolled in HVP is developed to meet the needs of the client and is modified as necessary to reflect their ability to participate. Plans must indicate the HVP activity, expected hours for home visiting sessions, expected hours volunteering in an early learning setting, other concurrent WTW activities to which the client is assigned, and the identified supportive service needs.

Voluntary clients benefit from HVP by receiving not only coaching in prenatal and postnatal care but also enabling families to smoothly transition into WTW activities and employment.

Exempt Client Engagement:

To evaluate and engage Exempt clients, caseworkers complete a monthly contact with the WTW-exempt individual beginning 60 days and 30 days before the exemption is

expected to end, or sooner if there is reason to believe that there has been a change in condition, or at Redetermination.

Chronically ill individuals or individuals who are considered to be permanently disabled may be referred to the Public Consulting Group (PCG) for SSI Advocacy Services.

Exempt Volunteers:

Exempt clients are encouraged to volunteer in the WTW program. Hourly participation requirements do not apply to exempt volunteers. An exempt volunteer is required to sign a WTW Plan and comply with the WTW Program if they want to participate in WTW. In addition, an exempt volunteer is eligible to supportive services including child care, transportation, and ancillary.

Exempt volunteers who are not compliant with their WTW Plan are subject to losing their supportive services for failure to participate. No sanction is imposed, but proper notification is sent to discontinue supportive services.

Sanction and Non-Compliance Engagement:

For participants who enter noncompliance and are at risk of sanction, case managers are required to:

- Initiate the Good Cause Determination contact and appointment
- Inform and collaborate with the eligibility worker
- Determine if Good Cause exists; clearly document reasoning for granting good cause in the system
- Assess for participation barriers and resolutions
- Evaluate continued eligibility to supportive services
- Assess the need to conduct an FSA
- Support and encourage participant's return to WTW activities if good cause is established
- Develop a Compliance Plan if the participant attends the Good Cause Determination interview and Good Cause does not exist
- Send a notification form to the eligibility worker to start the sanction process if participant remains uncooperative

Sanction Re-Engagement Process:

During the first 12 months after a financial sanction is imposed, Continuing Employment & Eligibility Specialists will continue to contact the client to discuss the benefits of participating in the WTW program. CEEs are expected to complete outreach efforts throughout the 12-month sanction re-engagement period utilizing all client contact opportunities, planned and unplanned.

If the client agrees to cure their sanction, the CEES and WTW case manager collaborate to engage the client in WTW activities and ensure supportive services needs are being met.

Family Support Assessment (FSA):

In July 2022, PQA implemented the FSA process which aims to utilize a holistic, supportive approach to assist CalWORKs families in identifying areas of need, overcoming barriers, and promoting self-sufficiency. The FSA process includes assessing and addressing family's needs, organizing a Family Support Team (FST), monitoring the family's progress for up to 12 months, and measuring outcomes. Caseworkers are encouraged to refer families to FSA when family needs include, but are not limited to: Domestic, Mental, or Substance Abuse Services; Housing & Homeless resources; WTW participation concerns; and general safety concerns or legal issues.

Part 5. Practice Changes to Consider

1. Why are measures in this programmatic grouping being considered?

Based on the Agency's research and analysis of focus group feedback, CDSS Cal-OAR Dashboard performance measures, and internal sources, Orange County will likely be considering Engagement Rate, Sanction Rate, and Sanction Resolution Rate, or any combination of these programmatic grouping measures and Initial Engagement performance measures.

While Orange County performance is strong in both grouping measures, the Cal-OAR Team has identified that there is room for improvement in caseworker training, barrier removal services, and WTW engagement and activity sequencing.

The Agency plans on closely examining all processes related to promoting the well-being of CalWORKs families with most, if not all, needs met and creating more thorough, thoughtful, and tailored paths to self-sufficiency. The Cal-OAR Team hypothesizes that improvements in these areas will lead to better education and employment outcomes for Orange County CW/WTW families with long-term sustained self-sufficiency. Additionally, the Cal-OAR Team will concurrently be studying strong and underperforming sub demographic groups to identify additional opportunities for improvement and drivers of success, as well as program re-entries.

2. Or, why aren't measures in this programmatic grouping being considered?

N/A

3. Are there best or promising practices that can be applied? What literature, data, or other information supports the practice?

Promoting Participation. How To Increase Involvement in Welfare-to-Work Activities. A How-To Guide.

Gayle Hamilton, Susan Scrivener, 1999

[PDF Report hosted by Education Resources Information Center](#)

This guide (Hamilton & Scrivener, 1999) highlights multiple strategies to increase ongoing participation, some of which are:

- Closely monitoring client participation in welfare-to-work
- Integrated case management (when one staff member is responsible for both eligibility and work participation)
- The importance of a well-designed automated tracking system to monitor client participation in activities (including a system that has the
- capability to connect to information from contracted service providers)
- Making participation monitoring a program priority
- Frequent contact between clients and staff
- Communication between program participants, and
- Creating close linkages between the program and service providers

The Use of TANF Work-Oriented Sanctions in Illinois, New Jersey, and South Carolina

Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 2004

LaDonna Pavetti, Michelle K. Derr, Gretchen Kirby, Robert G. Wood, Melissa A. Clark

[PDF Report hosted by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation](#)

This report noted that fully sanctioned TANF recipients (recipients whose sanction results in the elimination of the family's entire cash grant) are more likely to return to TANF than recipients who were not sanctioned at the time they left TANF. According to the report, most studies have indicated that sanctioned families are more likely than non-sanctioned families to display one or more characteristics that make them harder to employ. The report found that within nine months of exiting TANF, 32% of those who left TANF while they were sanctioned returned to TANF compared to the 22% who left TANF for reasons other than a sanction (Pavetti et al., 2004).

4. If changes have been made to improve performance in the past, what were the changes, and the associated results?

In previous years, the Agency has implemented proactive approaches to reduce sanctions and re-engage non-participants. In July 2011, the Agency implemented a two-step review process to ensure all sanctions are appropriate and that case managers explored all possible avenues before requesting a sanction. Additionally, the Agency is always working on enhancing barrier screening and assessment procedures to accurately identify all barriers to participation.

Refer to Section 1, Part 1, Question 4, for Client Engagement System (CES) information which assists case managers and program administrators in tracking engagement for WTW activities. Additionally, as referenced in Section 3, Part 2, Question 2, the Agency has begun aligning contractual outcome objectives with Cal-OAR goals in mind such as embedding Sanction Resolution and Wage Progression related goals within Integrated Job Services contracts.

5. Would a Peer Review be helpful in addressing challenges in this area?

Yes, Orange County is interested in collaborating with counties with strong performance in this category.

Part 6. Partner and Collaborator Feedback

1. Partner and Collaborator feedback and results provided on the programmatic grouping of measures.

Focus groups using small group discussions and brainstorming sessions were held in the months of August and September 2022 to provide an opportunity for eligibility workers, case managers, and EQUUS to provide input regarding their experience with ongoing engagement services and activities. Partners and collaborators noted the following key themes:

- The need to promote the usage of Family Support Assessment (FSA). Clients are often in crisis and present with multiple diverse needs. Collaborative efforts such as the FSA process and a team approach to services are an effective way to assist clients in navigating service networks available to them in a positive, collaborative, and a strength-based environment
- Focus group participants noted that staff who are skilled at engaging clients with a strength-based approach, empathy, and who utilize powerful stories to

motivate clients are more effective in assisting families throughout the different stages of the program

- A recommendation for a more simplified process to cure WTW sanctions that is flexible, simple, and tailored to meet clients' needs
- The increasing need for transitional support for clients who transfer from community colleges to a four-year degree program since juggling family and work along with school requirements is very challenging
- Services should always be provided in the context of supportive, trusted, and empowering environments
- Establishing a relationship with the client is fundamental to developing a better understanding of family dynamics to facilitate intervention, motivation, and client engagement in WTW
- A challenge of significant paperwork involved in submitting a request for child care plan approvals

2. Describe how Partner and Collaborator feedback results influenced the measure analysis.

Findings from focus groups suggest that continuing to improve Orange County's engagement in ongoing and early stages of the CW/WTW program is essential to sustained success and self-sufficiency for CalWORKs families.

A recurring theme was that clients experienced higher success rates when they felt ready to engage in WTW activities versus being prescribed activities to meet requirements. Among the most prevalent challenges to engage clients are lack of motivation, mental health issues, complex family needs, domestic violence, unstable housing, high stress environments, living in poverty, socio-cultural challenges, and lack of experience in accessing and following through with services and activity requirements. Effective engagement is a core function of CalWORKs and is necessary to help clients see the program as a safe and meaningful program.

Focus group participants were surprised to see a higher than statewide average Sanction Rate. Due to conflicting feedback from collaborators and performance measure data, the Cal-OAR Team is currently examining Agency documentation on SAWS entries and is reviewing data for affected cases to ensure an accurate Sanction Rate for Orange County.

Additionally, focus group participants noted that case managers who apply healthy flexibilities when interpreting policies and procedures are more successful in maintaining higher engagement rates and positive outcomes. Participants noted that clients are more

motivated to participate when they are empowered to pursue their goals through meaningful interactions.

Lastly, most participants agreed that supportive relationships with case managers are essential to helping clients develop executive function skills and are critical throughout the engagement process.

3. Did Partners and Collaborators agree with the measures selected for targeted improvement strategies? If not, describe the different perspective.

The Agency has not finalized any targeted improvement strategies as of the writing of the Cal-CSA. Ongoing discussion and efforts are needed to identify targeted performance measures in the coming months. However, partners and collaborators agreed on the observed themes and recommendations provided in this section. More in-depth review and analysis will be conducted within the next few months to identify targeted areas for improvements.

Section 6. Supportive Service Analysis

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

Section 7. Education Analysis

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

Section 8. Employment and Wages Analysis

Part 1. Employment and Wages Analysis

1. Compare performance to data baselines and, for process measures, to target thresholds (not applicable during first Cal-OAR process).

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

2. Identify any emerging trends in the measures. What inferences can be drawn?

The Cal-OAR Team reviewed and analyzed data from the CDSS Cal-OAR Dashboard on the Employment Rate of Current CalWORKs Individuals (Employment Rate), Wage Progression, and Post CalWORKs Employment Rate performance measures. The findings are outlined below.

Employment Rate of Current CalWORKs Individuals:

Orange County's Employment Rate was reviewed using data from October 2020 to September 2021.

- The highest Employment Rate for Orange County occurred from July to September 2021 (OC: 32.8%, CA: 30.5%); the lowest occurred from January to March 2021 (OC: 29.6%, CA: 26.5%).
- The Employment Rate for Orange County and California (OC: 31.3% average, CA: 28.8% average) showed minimal variation.

Wage Progression – Cohort One:

Orange County's Wage Progression for Cohort One was reviewed using quarterly data for clients who exited the CalWORKs program between October 2019 to September 2020. The following trends were observed:

- Entry Quarter (PQ 0): The highest median earnings for Orange County at PQ 0 occurred for those who exited from April to June 2020 (OC: \$2,324, CA: \$1,856); the lowest occurred for the July to September 2020 exit quarter (OC: \$1,869, CA: \$1,759).
- Orange County's median earnings (\$2,075 average) at PQ 0 remained steady except for an increase for the April to June 2020 exit quarter (\$2,324). The

State's median earnings (\$1,834 average) reflected minimal variation in the same period.

- Two Quarters after Exit (PQ 2): The highest median earnings for Orange County at PQ 2 occurred for those who exited from January to March 2020 (OC: \$5,980, CA: \$5,740); the lowest occurred for the October to December 2019 exit quarter (OC: \$4,812, CA: \$5,230).
- Orange County's median earnings (\$5,617 average) at PQ 2 trended upward. The State's median earnings (\$5,634 average) also trended slightly upward.
- Four Quarters after Exit (PQ 4): The highest median earnings for Orange County at PQ 4 occurred for those who exited from July to September 2020 (OC: \$7,038, CA: \$6,242); the lowest occurred for the October to December 2019 exit quarter (OC: \$6,044, CA: \$6,469).
- Orange County's median earnings (\$6,539 average) at PQ 4 trended upward. The State's median earnings (\$6,236 average) trended downward.

Wage Progression – Cohort Two:

Orange County's Wage Progression for Cohort Two was reviewed using quarterly data for clients who exited the CalWORKs program between April 2020 to March 2021. The following trends were observed:

- PQ 0: The highest median earnings for Orange County at PQ 0 occurred for those who exited from April to June 2020 (OC: \$2,324, CA: \$1,855); the lowest occurred for the July to September 2020 exit quarter (OC: \$1,862, CA: \$1,758).
- Orange County's median earnings (\$2,030 average) at PQ 0 trended downward. The State's median earnings (\$1,766 average) also trended slightly downward.
- PQ 2: The highest median earnings for Orange County at PQ 2 occurred for those who exited from January to March 2021 (OC: \$6,732, CA: \$6,142); the lowest occurred for the July to September 2020 exit quarter (OC: \$5,756, CA: \$5,687).
- Orange County's median earnings (\$6,256 average) at PQ 2 trended significantly upward. The State's median earnings (\$5,965 average) also trended upward.

Post CalWORKs Employment Rate – Cohort One:

Orange County's Post CalWORKs Employment Rate for Cohort One was reviewed using quarterly data for clients who exited the CalWORKs program between October 2019 to September 2020. The following trends were observed:

- PQ 2: The highest Post CalWORKs Employment Rate for Orange County at PQ 2 occurred for those who exited from October to December 2019 (OC: 45.9%, CA: 45.9%); the lowest occurred for the July to September 2020 exit quarter (OC: 40.0%, CA: 39.0%).
- Orange County's rate (42.8% average) at PQ 2 showed a downward trend, as did the State's rate (42.6% average).
- PQ 4: The highest Post CalWORKs Employment Rate for Orange County at PQ 4 occurred for those who exited from October to December 2019 (OC: 44.8%, CA: 45.1%); the lowest occurred for the April to June 2020 exit quarter (OC: 40.3%, CA: 40.1%).
- Orange County's rate (42.4% average) at PQ 4 showed a downward trend with a slight increase for the July to September 2020 exit quarter, as did the State's rate (42.1% average).

Post CalWORKs Employment Rate – Cohort Two:

Orange County's Post CalWORKs Rate for Cohort Two was reviewed using quarterly data for clients who exited the CalWORKs program between April 2020 to March 2021. The following trends were observed:

- The highest rate for Orange County occurred for those who exited from January to March 2021 (OC: 47.4%, CA: 43.5%); the lowest occurred for the July to September 2020 exit quarter (OC: 39.6%, CA: 38.7%).
- The Post CalWORKs Employment Rate for Cohort 2 for Orange County (41.9% average) at PQ 2 reflected an upward trend. The State's rate (40.8% average) reflected minimal variation.

It is important to note, however, that Orange County is a travel and tourism destination. These industries were significantly impacted by COVID-19 and stay-at-home orders so the aforementioned data trends may be skewed for 2020 and 2021. For this reason, the Cal-OAR Team is hesitant to make inferences on this data as it may not accurately reflect baseline data for Orange County.

3. What factors may have contributed to the CWD performance on these measures? Consider both strengths and challenges, both internal and external to the CWD.

There were no major changes to our policies and procedures during the measurement period that impacted this performance measure group; however, pandemic health risks, related stimuli, and enhanced unemployment benefits may have influenced current and former clients' decisions to return to work.

4. Identify unmet needs and service gaps. Describe the CWD process for tracking and addressing these needs.

The strong correlation between income and education is well-researched and confirmed by statewide data available in the CDSS Cal-OAR Dashboard. Throughout the development of the Cal-CSA, the associated research, and focus groups, the Cal-OAR Team has determined that success for Orange County WTW participants is correlated with their educational and vocational achievements.

According to OC Community Indicators Report 2021-22, the “housing wage” or minimum wage a worker would need to earn to afford renting a median-priced, one-bedroom apartment increased to \$36.31 an hour or \$75,529 per year, which represents an increase of 5.8% over last year's housing wage. A minimum wage worker would need to work 104 hours a week to afford a one-bedroom apartment, 128 hours a week to afford two bedrooms, and 177 hours per week to afford three bedrooms (Figure 3: Orange County's Monthly Cost of Rent, page 8 of this document).

Findings from this report suggest that for Orange County CalWORKs clients to be self-sufficient, they will need to earn approximately \$75,529 per year; therefore, minimum wage jobs and first available employment are not viable options for long term success.

During this Cal-CQI cycle, the Agency will prioritize effective removal of all or most barriers followed by informed skill building, education, and employment activities to support clients in securing “housing wage” employment.

5. Identify changes or data trends since the last Cal-OAR process (not applicable during first Cal-OAR cycle). What impact does this have on service delivery and availability of services?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

Part 2. Demographic Analysis

1. Do disparities amongst different subpopulations exist?

The Cal-OAR Team analyzed the Employment Rate of Current CalWORKs Individuals (Employment Rate), Wage Progression, and Post CalWORKs Employment Rate performance measures data available on the CDSS Cal-OAR Dashboard.

For the purposes of this assessment, the Cal-OAR Team highlighted any disparity of five (5) percentage points or more. Due to data de-identification, data was unavailable for some of the review quarters.

Employment Rate: Disparities were observed when analyzing data by race and language. No disparities were observed when analyzing data by AU type or gender.

- Race/Ethnicity: The Employment Rate of clients identifying as White (24.5%) was 6.8% lower than aggregate rate of 31.3%.
- Language: The Employment Rate of clients whose primary language was “Other Language” (23.5%) was 7.8% lower than the aggregate rate of 31.3%.

Wage Progression – Cohorts 1 and 2: Disparities were observed when analyzing data by AU type, gender, language, and race.

- AU Type: The Wage Progression of clients in Cohort 1 for PQ4 (four quarters after program exit) with case types Non-MOE (\$5,722) and TANF Timed-Out (\$5,662) were lower than the categorical average of \$6,540. A similar trend was observed for Cohort 1 and 2 in most measured quarters.
- Gender: The Wage Progression of clients in Cohort 1 for PQ4 who identified as Female (\$6,380) was lower than the clients who identified as Male (\$7,431). A similar trend was observed for Cohort 1 and 2 in most measured quarters.
- Language: The Wage Progression of clients in Cohort 1 for PQ4 whose primary language was Spanish (\$6,212) and “Other Language” (\$3,882) were lower than the categorical average of \$6,540. A similar trend was observed for Cohort 1 and 2 in most measured quarters.
- Race/Ethnicity: The Wage Progression of clients in Cohort 1 and 2 who identified as Asian, White, and Black, was lower overall than Hispanic and “Other Race/Ethnicity” counterparts. It is important to note that sample sizes in this sub demographic were inconsistent. The Cal-OAR Team will be further researching the Wage Progression for clients by Race/Ethnicity throughout the Cal-CQI process.

Post CalWORKs Employment Rate – Cohorts 1 and 2: Disparities were observed when analyzing data by language and race. However, it is important to note that clients who identified as Female maintained a slightly higher Post CW Employment Rate than clients

who identified as Male and that Two Parent AU types maintained a slightly lower Post CW Employment Rate.

- Language: The Post CW Employment Rate of clients in Cohort 1 for PQ4 whose primary language was “Other Language” (33.8%) was lower than the categorical average of 42.4%. A similar trend was observed for Cohort 1 and 2 in most measured quarters.
- Race/Ethnicity: The Post CW Employment Rate of clients for PQ2 (two quarters after program exit) who identified as Asian (36.3%) and White (32.5%) were lower than the categorical average of 42.8%. A similar trend was observed for Cohort 1 and 2 in most measured quarters.

The Cal-OAR Team has not identified any contributing factors to the rate variations in the populations listed above. The Cal-OAR Team will continue to explore systemic causes of and contributing factors to disparities and develop meaningful strategies to address them throughout the Cal-CQI process.

2. Are there disparities between the population being served, the services provided, and the services available in the community (either CWD provided or services available in the community)?

All Orange County CW/WTW clients are engaged in employment and/or educational activities and are assessed for barriers and connected to barrier removal services when appropriate. The Agency has many established policies and procedures in place to ensure services are provided to all clients in an equitable way. To ensure consistency and accountability, case and quality assurance review processes are in place to detect any issues. There are no known identified disparities between the services provided by the Agency; however, there may be variations between the services available at each of the CW/WTW offices based on capacity and the need of the population being served.

Further assessment will be needed to conduct a comparative analysis between engagement activities offered by the Agency and the services available in the community. Additionally, further assessment of data and discussion will be conducted to investigate and determine if disparities exist among various measures and subpopulations.

3. What effort has the CWD made to address these disparities? Explain what barriers have arisen while addressing the disparities.

The Agency's goal is to reduce observed disparities, provide equitable services to all populations, empower communities, and promote equitable outcomes. The Cal-OAR Team will continue to explore systemic causes of and contributing factors to any identified disparities and develop meaningful strategies to address them throughout the Cal-CQI process.

4. How may the results inform Cal-SIP strategies?

Following the submission of the Cal-CSA, the Cal-OAR Team will be closely analyzing individual level data available through the Cal-OAR 19 reports and will discuss emerging themes from the Cal-CSA and additional research with focus groups and partners.

Part 3. Outcome Analysis

1. What other performance measures might impact these measures?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

2. How have implemented strategies from the previous Cal-OAR process impacted performance?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

3. What were successes and challenges from previous Cal-OAR process?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

4. What previous Cal-SIP strategies might the county consider building upon in the next Cal-SIP period?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

Part 4. System Analysis

1. Analysis of program practices as they relate to each programmatic grouping of measures.

The primary focus of WTW case managers is to help adult clients receiving cash aid move from CalWORKs dependency to self-sufficiency through employment-focused and training activities that lead to unsubsidized employment. During Appraisal, the case managers encourage clients to provide information about their employment history, education, and skills to assign them to appropriate activities.

The employment activities include Unsubsidized Employment, Subsidized Employment (SE), self-employment, and work-study.

SE is time-limited employment in which the client's employer is partially or wholly reimbursed for wages and necessary training costs related to the job. SE provides clients who have little or no work history with an opportunity to learn soft skills and build workplace confidence and self-esteem through paid employment at a public, private, or non-profit worksite. Clients gain basic employability skills and enhanced experience, increasing their chances of securing Unsubsidized Employment after the SE period ends. Our Agency provides SE programs through EQUUS and the Santa Ana Workforce Development Board.

For career and wage progression purposes, WTW clients are referred to Vocational Education Activities which include Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language, General Education Development (GED) Academy, GED Preparation, Cell-Ed, Self-Initiated Program, Privately Funded Postsecondary Educational Institutions, Publicly Funded Postsecondary Educational Institutions, and Vocational Training (VT) through our contracted partners.

VT is a post-assessment, transitional, and short-term training activity to prepare participants for a specific trade, occupation, or vocation. VT activities are tailored towards fields identified as growth-oriented, emerging careers, meeting an unmet community need, or in high demand for new employees. VT is provided in our Agency through three contracted providers: Anaheim Workforce Development Board (Anaheim WDB), EQUUS, and Santa Ana Workforce Development Board (Santa Ana WDB). The case manager and contracted provider collaborate with each client to assess needs and career goals and arrange an appropriate VT program at training sites throughout Orange County.

2. Further assessment by the CWD of its service delivery system and mechanisms.

No further information to add at this time.

3. General Measure Analysis

Regardless of existing employment, case managers assess each client's employability and identify barriers to employment. Based on initial and ongoing assessments, case managers update and maintain plans geared towards helping clients increase income and self-sufficiency. If the client is already employed, case managers will work to identify the client's service needs by assessing the individual's goals, educational background, employment history, and employment skills.

If the client is unemployed at the time of the Initial Engagement, the case manager will:

- Communicate and collaborate with the client to gather relevant information to assess employability and identify appropriate barrier-removal services
- Provide efficient and focused case management, including high-level fieldwork (e.g., home visits, WTW activity site, and job fair)
- Identify the participant's service needs by assessing the individual's goals, educational background, employment history, and skills
- Assign WTW Activities and make referrals to appropriate service providers to assist the client in obtaining employment
- Coordinate case conferences with Employment Eligibility Specialists, Senior Social Workers, service providers, and partners to provide the participant with the necessary supportive services to ensure successful participation in their assigned WTW activity
- Monitor participation and utilize strategies to maintain and increase required participation hours
- Provide ongoing coaching and mentoring

For the 2021 Calendar Year, 32% of the total activities of WTW enrollees were Unsubsidized Employment, 1% Subsidized Employment (SE), and 3% were Self-Employment.

SE provides access to employment and earnings while increasing work experience, skills, and connections that improve a participant's employability after the subsidized employment period ends.

In addition to the hands-on work experience, the participant will:

- Learn primary job-seeking skills such as developing a resume, preparing for an interview, dressing professionally, and communicating with employers
- Learn job retention topics such as attendance and punctuality, social etiquette, productivity, common reasons for promotion and dismissal, problem-solving skills, and planning to handle common problems new employees face

Orange County's SE programs are administered through partnerships between the Agency, EQUUS, and the Santa Ana WDB that provides WEX.

At the end of the activity, it is expected that the worksite employer will hire the participant into unsubsidized employment as a regular employee. The contractor will assist the participant with the job search for unsubsidized employment if the worksite employer does not offer a long-term position to the participant.

According to the CDSS Cal-OAR Dashboard, the median income for Orange County in 2019 and 2020 was \$90,234 and \$94,441, respectively (Figure 6: Median Household Income by Year, page 11 of this document).

Prior to 2023, the only Post Aid service provided to clients that exited the program with earnings was child care (Stage 2 Child Care). Effective January 1, 2023, Employment Support and Post-Aid Supportive Services (ES PASS) will be offered in Orange County.

ES PASS focuses on identifying the needs of WTW participants and resources to overcome barriers to self-sufficiency. ES PASS will assist with basic needs such as transportation, housing, child care, and other supportive services. Additional assistance will be provided to post-aid participants with verified employment to support job retention for up to twelve (12) months.

Part 5. Practice Changes to Consider

1. Why are measures in this programmatic grouping being considered?

N/A

2. Or, why aren't measures in this programmatic grouping being considered?

According to the OC Community Indicators Report 2021-22, the "housing wage" or minimum wage a worker would need to earn to rent a median-priced, one-bedroom apartment increased to \$36.31 an hour or \$75,529 per year, which represents an increase of 5.8% over last year's housing wage. A minimum wage worker would need to work 104 hours a week to afford a one-bedroom apartment, 128 hours a week to afford two bedrooms, and 177 hours per week to afford three bedrooms (Figure 3: Orange County's Monthly Cost of Rent, page 8 of this document).

Findings from this report suggest that for Orange County CalWORKs clients to be self-sufficient, they will need to earn approximately \$75,529 per year; therefore, minimum wage jobs and first available employment are not viable options for long term success.

Based on the CDSS Cal-OAR Dashboard, the median household income in Orange County for the years 2019 and 2020 were \$90,234 and \$94,441, respectively (Figure 6: Median Household Income by Year, page 11 of this document). Additionally, the median earnings by educational attainment for the population 25 years old and over for 2019 and 2020 are as follows:

- Less than High School: \$24,638 and \$25,941
- High School Graduate or Equivalence: \$31,824 and \$33,726
- Some College or Associate Degrees: \$42,420 and \$43,086
- Bachelor's Degree: \$64,948 and \$67,002
- Graduate or Professional Degree: \$91,962 and \$93,165

To illustrate the gap in education and employment skills needed to establish self-sufficiency in Orange County, the highest level of educational attainment for 45.0% of the Agency's CalWORKs clients who completed an OCAT appraisal in 2021 was a high school degree and 20.9% had less than a high school degree (Figure 5: Highest Level of Educational Attainment of Orange County CalWORKs Clients, page 10 of this document).

Therefore, for the first Cal-OAR CQI cycle, the Agency is looking at prioritizing Initial and Ongoing Engagement grouping measures to help ensure that Orange County CalWORKs clients are receiving appropriate barrier removal and supportive services, informed WTW activity sequencing, and support for skill-building, educational achievement, and/or vocational training.

3. Are there best or promising practices that can be applied? What literature, data, or other information supports the practice?

CDSS Dashboard (County Demographic Profile), Median Earnings by Educational Attainment (using data obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates): Educational Attainment, Table S1501
[American Community Survey, Table S1501](#)

According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau (American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2020, Table S1501) for California and Orange County, a positive correlation can be observed between level of educational attainment and median earnings. Furthermore, a negative correlation can be observed between level of educational attainment and rate of poverty (as level of educational attainment increases, rate of poverty decreases) (Figure 4: Median Earnings and Rate of Poverty in Relation to Level of Educational Attainment, page 9 of this document). This data supports the

importance of assisting CalWORKs clients with achieving their educational attainment goals to promote wage progression and self-sufficiency.

Increasing Employment Stability and Earnings for Low-Wage Workers Lessons from the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) Project

Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) Report, 2012

Gayle Hamilton and Susan Scrivener

[PDF Report hosted by MDRC](#)

This report analyzed the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project that launched in 1999. The sample size of the research referenced in this report is over 45,000 participants from 16 programs tested in eight states. Approximately half the participants lacked a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) certificate.

The report highlighted three strategies tested by ERA that were hypothesized to have the potential to improve employment retention and advancement. Three strategies were found to be supported by research: providing financial incentives, using for-profit providers to assist with transitions between jobs, and using community-based organizations (CBOs). According to the report, no evidence was found to support the idea that encouraging unemployed individuals to find a job in their preferred field (as opposed to any job) resulted in higher employment retention or advancement.

The report found that in the Riverside Post-Assistance Self-Sufficiency (PASS) program (a program in Riverside, CA which used three CBOs and a community college as the main providers of a range of individualized post-aid services), average annual earnings increased by \$870 over a four-year follow-up period (a 10% increase relative to the control group level) (Hamilton & Scrivener, 2012).

Transitional Jobs: Helping TANF Recipients with Barriers to Employment Succeed in the Labor Market

Allegra Baider and Abbey Frank, 2006.

[PDF Report hosted by the Center for Law and Social Policy](#)

This publication (Baider & Frank, 2006) emphasized that strategies to increase participation should address the needs and circumstances of the participants and their families and highlighted transitional jobs programs as a “bridge to unsubsidized employment with a comprehensive set of services to help participants overcome barriers and build work-related skills” (Baider & Frank, p. 1). According to the publication, an evaluation of Washington’s Community Jobs program (a paid work program to increase participant employability and provide barrier removal and case management services) found that the average participant had eight barriers to employment; however, after completing the program, 72% of participants entered unsubsidized employment and the

average increase in income was 60% during the first two years in the workforce compared to income prior to the program.

The publication recommended that transitional job programs should complete in-depth assessments to identify barriers and should provide training to staff to ensure identification of barriers. The publication further stated that programs should include an education and training component and that participant “training and education should be related to skills in demand in the local labor market, and targeted industries that pay higher wages” (Baider & Frank, p. 7).

4. If changes have been made to improve performance in the past, what were the changes, and the associated results?

The Agency is always working on building proactive business processes to enhance Employment, Wage Progression, and Post-Employment related outcomes for Orange County CalWORKs clients. Current business processes will be evaluated considering the external factors affecting the outcome of these measures and our clients’ long-term financial stability and self-sufficiency.

In the past couple years, the Agency has developed Integrated Job Services (IJS) to help families by enhancing the employability of WTW participants through engagement in employment preparatory activities and placement in paying jobs. IJS consists of three (3) Service Components which include: Employment Services (ES), Employment Support and Post-Aid Supportive Services (ES PASS), and Subsidized Employment/Vocational Training (SE/VTR) Services. The ES PASS service component of IJS is offered to assist both WTW participants and former participants make measurable progress toward achieving and maintaining self-sufficiency.

The implementation of IJS has created a streamlined approach to providing employment services to Welfare-to-Work (WTW) participants. It has prepared participants for job placement and provided Post-Aid Supportive Services to support former CalWORKs/Welfare-To-Work (CW/WTW) participants to maintain employment or advance to new employment. In addition, centralizing the three components of IJS has allowed for strong internal and external communication as well as increased consistency with monitoring contractual obligations and outcomes.

5. Would a Peer Review be helpful in addressing challenges in this area?

Yes, Orange County is interested in collaborating with counties with strong performance in this category.

Part 6. Partner and Collaborator Feedback

1. Partner and Collaborator feedback and results provided on the programmatic grouping of measures.

Focus groups were conducted in August and September of 2022 to discuss Employment and Income activities. The participants in these focus groups were eligibility workers, case managers, and EQUUS. Partners and collaborators noted the following key themes:

- Focus group participants emphasized more intensive case management with a holistic family approach at Initial Engagement that will assist in matching the individual to more suitable activities
- Developing a tailored WTW Plan that will include assessing the client's educational level, job history, and skill set to assign them appropriate activities
- Activity assignment must be done in collaboration with clients to increase accountability
- Identify and remove all barriers prior to engaging clients in any WTW activity, which includes the individual and family assessment
- Ensure child care and transportation are in place if needed before starting their work activities
- Most of the participants agreed that due to the lack of education, CalWORKs clients find themselves with minimum wage jobs, with a wage progression that is not sufficient to cover basic expenses, especially with the high cost of living in Orange County. The result is reflected in unstable employment that is not enough to sustain a stable home, which can result in homelessness.

2. Describe how Partner and Collaborator feedback results influenced the measure analysis.

Focus groups emphasized the desirable outcomes for clients who find a job with a salary that will cover their needs and promote self-sufficiency. However, they all agree that to achieve this goal, educational attainment levels must improve.

Focus group participants highlighted the importance of increasing client educational attainment levels, starting with promoting ESL as an activity, and combining it with Subsidized Employment to obtain experience and education, which will result in smoother transitions to unsubsidized jobs.

This feedback aligns with analysis of this performance measure grouping; however, focus group participants have observed that many clients find college applications and paperwork lengthy and complex and need to be encouraged to apply.

The successful engagement of the client in an Employment or School Activity is often correlated with family dynamics. Therefore, it is crucial to address barriers such as domestic abuse, mental health, substance abuse, homelessness, and sociocultural challenges that might affect participation at the time of Initial Engagement.

EQUUS partners stated that when case managers established a high trust relationship with clients and the WTW Plan was built through a collaborative process, increased rates of success were observed.

3. Did Partners and Collaborators agree with the measures selected for targeted improvement strategies? If not, describe the different perspective.

The Agency has not finalized any targeted improvement strategies as of the writing of the Cal-CSA. Ongoing discussion and efforts are needed to identify targeted performance measures in the coming months. However, partners and collaborators agreed on the observed themes and recommendations provided in this section. More in-depth review and analysis will be conducted within the next few months to identify targeted areas for improvements.

Section 9. Exit and Reentries Analysis

Part 1. Exit and Reentries Analysis

1. Compare performance to data baselines and, for process measures, to target thresholds (not applicable during first Cal-OAR process).

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

2. Identify any emerging trends in the measures. What inferences can be drawn?

The Cal-OAR Team reviewed and analyzed data from the CDSS Cal-OAR Dashboard data on Rate of Exits with Earnings, Rate of Program Re-entries, and Rate of Program Re-entries after Exit with Earnings. The findings are outlined below.

- The Rate of Exits with Earnings was overall higher than statewide average, with the highest rate of 46.7% in Q3 of 2021 (0.8% higher than statewide average), and the lowest rate of 41.1% in Q1 of 2021 (0.2% lower than statewide average). From Q4 of 2020 to Q3 of 2021, Orange County's Rate of Exits with Earnings (43.5% average) trended upward with an initial decrease in Q1 of 2021. The State's rate (42.6% average) decreased in Q1 and Q2 of 2021 and then rose to 45.9% in Q3 of 2021.
- The Rate of Program Re-entries was overall lower than statewide average, with the highest rate of 13.6% in Q4 of 2019 (1% higher than statewide average), and the lowest rate of 7.5% in Q2 of 2020 (3.1% lower than statewide average). From Q4 of 2019 to Q3 of 2020, Orange County's Rate of Program Reentries (10.2% average) trended downward. The State's rate (11.6% average) showed minimal variation during the same period.
- The Rate of Program Re-entries after Exit with Earnings was overall higher than statewide average, with the highest rate of 16.2% in Q4 of 2019 (3.9% higher than statewide average), and the lowest rate of 8.6% in Q2 of 2020 (2.2% lower than statewide average). From Q4 of 2019 to Q3 of 2020, Orange County's Rate of Program Reentries after Exit with Earnings (12% average) trended downward. The State's rate (11.5% average) showed minimal variation during the same period.

This group of performance measures had significant fluctuation during this period and was significantly affected as the result of COVID-19.

3. What factors may have contributed to the CWD performance on these measures? Consider both strengths and challenges, both internal and external to the CWD.

As a result of COVID-19, this group of performance measures was affected by various factors. One of them being three stimulus payments starting at \$1,200, \$600, and \$1,400, which boosted income to most households and the supplemental enhancement of Unemployment Benefits (\$600 per week). Many unemployed clients could cover their expenses with the extra income, making it harder for them to justify low-wage employment and jeopardizing pandemic related stimuli.

4. Identify unmet needs and service gaps. Describe the CWD process for tracking and addressing these needs.

Seventy-five percent of the participants in the Caseworker Focus Group agreed that clients who exit the CalWORKs program return within 12 months due to a lack of post-aid services. The uncertainty of a new job, the high cost of living, and the stressor that clients experience when they leave the program are intense. In addition, they must cover other expenses that are paid through the program while they are enrolled.

Some of the clients were receiving housing assistance which is one of the most significant expenses in Orange County; losing this benefit once they exit the program creates an extra level of stress. Most of the participants agreed that a significant proportion of current and former clients preferred to stay or returned to CalWORKs to continue to receive housing support rather than exploring alternatives.

The Cal-OAR Team believes that Post Aid services offered through ES PASS will help close the gap and that transitional assistance with housing, child care, transportation, and other life skills will help improve performance measures in this grouping.

5. Identify changes or data trends since the last Cal-OAR process (not applicable during first Cal-OAR cycle). What impact does this have on service delivery and availability of services?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

Part 2. Demographic Analysis

1. Do disparities amongst different subpopulations exist?

The Cal-OAR Team analyzed the Rate of Exits with Earnings performance measure using data from Q4 2020 to Q3 2021. The Rate of Program Re-entries and Rate of Program Re-entries after Exit with Earnings performance measures were analyzed using data from Q4 2019 to Q3 2020.

For the purposes of this assessment, the Cal-OAR Team highlighted any disparity of five (5) percentage points or more from the aggregate rate. Due to data de-identification, data was unavailable for some of the review quarters. Unless it is specified below that the disaggregated rate covers a period of twelve months, it can be assumed that the disaggregated rate is for a period less than twelve months.

Rate of Exits with Earnings: Disparities were observed when analyzing data by AU type, language, and race. No disparities were observed when analyzing data by gender.

- AU Type: The Rate of Exits with Earnings for Non-MOE (37.9%) and Two Parent (37.9%) cases was 5.6% lower than the aggregate rate of 43.5%.
- Language: The Rate of Exits with Earnings for clients whose primary language was “Other Language” (32%) was 11.5% lower than the aggregate rate of 43.5%.
- Race/Ethnicity: The Rate of Exits with Earnings for clients who identify as “Other Race/Ethnicity” (38.3%) and White (35.5%) cases was 5.2% and 8% lower than the aggregate rate of 43.5%, respectively.

Rate of Program Re-entries: Disparities were observed when analyzing data by race. No disparities were observed when analyzing data by AU type, gender, or language.

- Race/Ethnicity: The Rate of Program Re-entries for clients who identify as Black (19.2%) was 9% higher than the aggregate rate of 10.2%. However, it is important to note the small sample size compared to other groups. Data was not available for clients who identify as Asian due to data de-identification.

Rate of Program Re-entries after Exit with Earnings: No disparities were observed when analyzing data in this performance measure due to de-identified information and small sample size.

The Cal-OAR Team has not identified any contributing factors to the rate variations in the populations listed above. The Cal-OAR Team will continue to explore systemic causes of and contributing factors to disparities and develop meaningful strategies to address them throughout the Cal-CQI process.

2. Are there disparities between the population being served, the services provided, and the services available in the community (either CWD provided or services available in the community)?

All Orange County CW/WTW clients are engaged in employment and/or educational activities and are assessed for barriers and connected to barrier removal services when appropriate. The Agency has many established policies and procedures in place to ensure services are provided to all clients in an equitable way. To ensure consistency and accountability, case and quality assurance review processes are in place to detect any issues. There are no known identified disparities between the services provided by the Agency; however, there may be variations between the services available at each of the CW/WTW offices, based on capacity and the need of the population being served.

Further assessment will be needed to conduct a comparative analysis between engagement activities offered by the Agency and the services available in the community. Additionally, further assessment of data and discussion will be conducted to investigate and determine if disparities exist among various measures and subpopulations.

3. What effort has the CWD made to address these disparities? Explain what barriers have arisen while addressing the disparities.

The Agency's goal is to reduce observed disparities, provide equitable services to all populations, empower communities, and promote equitable outcomes. The Cal-OAR Team will continue to explore systemic causes of and contributing factors to any identified disparities and develop meaningful strategies to address them throughout the Cal-CQI process.

4. How may the results inform Cal-SIP strategies?

Following the submission of the Cal-CSA, the Cal-OAR Team will be closely analyzing individual level data available through the Cal-OAR19 reports and will discuss emerging themes from the Cal-CSA and additional research with focus groups and partners.

Part 3. Outcome Analysis

1. What other performance measures might impact these measures?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

2. How have implemented strategies from the previous Cal-OAR process impacted performance?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

3. What were successes and challenges from previous Cal-OAR process?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

4. What previous Cal-SIP strategies might the county consider building upon in the next Cal-SIP period?

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.

Part 4. System Analysis

1. Analysis of program practices as they relate to each programmatic grouping of measures.

The only Post-Aid service currently provided to clients that exit the program with earnings is child care. Former Clients who are employed can apply for child care services during their twenty-four (24) months of post-aid eligibility.

The Home Visiting Program (HVP) is another voluntary program that continues post-aid. HVP provides voluntary, high-quality, evidence-based home visiting services to support positive health, development, and well-being outcomes for pregnant and parenting individuals. The program's long-term goals are helping families reach self-sufficiency by improving family engagement practices, supporting the healthy development of young children living in poverty, and preparing parents for employment.

The Housing Support Program (HSP) also provides post-aid services in the form of continued rental assistance and housing support to clients who are discontinued for being over income; however, clients would have needed to be connected to HSP prior to leaving aid. The Agency will be looking to enhance linkages and utilization of HSP throughout the Cal-CQI process.

2. Further assessment by the CWD of its service delivery system and mechanisms.

No further information to add at this time.

3. General Measure Analysis

In addition to the information covered in Question 1 above, the Agency has developed Integrated Job Services (IJS) to help families by enhancing the employability of WTW participants through engagement in employment preparatory activities and placement in paying jobs. IJS consists of three (3) Service Components which include: Employment Services (ES), Employment Support and Post-Aid Supportive Services (ES PASS), and Subsidized Employment/Vocational Training (SE/VTR) Services. The ES PASS service component of IJS is offered to assist both WTW participants and former participants to make measurable progress toward achieving and maintaining self-sufficiency.

ES PASS focuses on identifying the needs of WTW participants and resources to overcome barriers to self-sufficiency. ES PASS will assist with basic needs such as transportation, housing, child care, and other supportive services. Additional assistance will be provided to post-aid participants with verified Employment to support job retention for up to twelve (12) months.

Part 5. Practice Changes to Consider

1. Why are measures in this programmatic grouping being considered?

N/A

2. Or, why aren't measures in this programmatic grouping being considered?

While the Agency is very interested in increasing performance for these programmatic grouping measures, we recognize that meaningful and long-term results are co-dependent on a variety of factors as highlighted throughout this report.

Therefore, the Agency will be focusing on early inputs and activities within CW/WTW while concurrently studying and enhancing Post Aid services as we learn more about the struggles Orange County CalWORKs clients are facing on their journeys to self-sufficiency.

3. Are there best or promising practices that can be applied? What literature, data, or other information supports the practice?

Leaving Welfare: Employment and Well-Being of Families that Left Welfare in the Post-Entitlement Era

Gregory Acs, Pamela Loprest, 2004

[PDF Report hosted by Upjohn Institute for Employment Research](#)

This article found that between one-fifth to one-third of clients who left TANF returned at some point in the year following exit. The article found that those who left TANF who had low levels of education, little past work experience, and poor health were more likely to return to TANF. The study found that those who were receiving subsidized child care, public health insurance, or government help with expenses were significantly less likely to return to welfare (Acs & Loprest, 2004).

Leavers, Stayers, and Cyclers: An Analysis of the Welfare Caseload

Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation

Cynthia Miller, 2002

[PDF Report hosted by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation](#)

The report found that those who left welfare had somewhat higher incomes than those who continued to receive welfare but most were still considered to be poor or “near-poor” and were more likely to have problems with access to health care. The report discussed the importance of clients having access to post-welfare services such as skill-building services (to help former recipients transition into better-paying jobs) and assistance with obtaining other benefits they may be entitled to such as Food Stamps and health insurance (Miller, 2002).

4. If changes have been made to improve performance in the past, what were the changes, and the associated results?

The implementation of ES PASS as referenced throughout Section 8 and Section 9 is the most recent and impactful change in recent years related to Program Exits and Re-entries. The Cal-OAR Team will be using this new service rollout to carefully study and learn to responsibly address the challenges that destabilize our families after they leave CW/WTW.

5. Would a Peer Review be helpful in addressing challenges in this area?

Yes, Orange County is interested in collaborating with counties with strong performance in this category.

Part 6. Partner and Collaborator Feedback

1. Partner and Collaborator feedback and results provided on the programmatic grouping of measures.

Focus groups were conducted in August and September of 2022 to discuss Employment and Income activities. The participants in these focus groups were eligibility workers, case managers, and EQUUS. Participants in the focus groups highlighted the need for upskilling CalWORKs clients. They identified the need to assist clients in competing in the job market. Often clients find jobs that are a patchwork of “lower-end”, often temporary office jobs, answering phones and filing papers which does not transition clients out of minimum wage jobs. Focus group participants highlighted the need to provide Post Aid services as a safety net for at least six to twelve months in areas such as housing, child care, and transportation, as well as basic life skills to better navigate their new environment.

2. Describe how Partner and Collaborator feedback results influenced the measure analysis.

Feedback from partner and collaborator meetings with supervisors and administrators as well as feedback regarding these performance measures from focus groups are in alignment with the analysis conducted by the Cal-OAR Team.

Partners and collaborators stated that continued home visits after exiting the program could be an opportunity to assess issues, strengths, and resources that might appear after they leave CW/WTW.

3. Did Partners and Collaborators agree with the measures selected for targeted improvement strategies? If not, describe the different perspective.

The Agency has not finalized any targeted improvement strategies as of the writing of the Cal-CSA. Ongoing discussion and efforts are needed to identify targeted performance measures in the coming months. However, partners and collaborators agreed on the observed themes and recommendations provided in this section. More in-depth review

and analysis will be conducted to identify targeted areas for improvements within the next few months.

Section 10. Summary of Cal-CSA Findings

Part 1. General Performance Analysis

1. How do measures directly and indirectly affect other measures?

After conducting focus groups, collaborating with SMEs, and analyzing various data available, the Cal-OAR Team believes that performance measures are inter-dependent meaning, an improvement in one area will generally mean an improvement in another. After analyzing initial findings, Orange County is particularly interested in Initial and Ongoing Engagement measures; however, we have not finalized our priority measures.

While Orange County performance is above State average on most measures, the efforts conducted to inform the Cal-CSA have highlighted opportunities for the Agency where we can do more for our clients. The Cal-OAR Team received multiple reports stating that empowered caseworkers, motivated clients, flexible processes, and informed and intentional barrier removal practices were generating the most favorable results.

For Cal-OAR Cycle 1, Orange County is looking to focus on early and foundational inputs in the CalWORKs program such as enhancing responsive worker relationships, building quality collaboration between clients and caseworkers, providing and following through on appropriate referrals, and building meaningful and persistent progress in our program. We believe an early investment in our short-term outcomes will lead to sustained and improved strong performance.

Ideally, during Cal-OAR Cycle 1, Orange County will be further increasing performance for Initial and Ongoing Engagement which will lead to sustained goal achievement, barrier mitigation, improved wages for clients, and better Orange County performance on the other performance measures.

Our shortlist of outcomes to target include:

- Orientation Attendance Rate
- OCAT/Appraisal Completion Timeliness Rate
- First Activity Attendance Rate
- Engagement Rate
- Sanction Resolution Rate
- Rate of Program Re-entries After Exits with Earnings

2. Discussion of performance measure data trends, and impact of programmatic factors on performance measures and service delivery.

For Initial Engagement performance measures, Orange County's average rates for the periods reviewed were higher than the statewide average rates (refer to Section 4, Part 1, Question 2 of this self-assessment for more details). For Ongoing Engagement performance measures, Orange County's average rates for the periods reviewed were higher than the statewide average rates (refer to Section 5, Part 1, Question 2 of this self-assessment for more details).

For the Employment and Wage Analysis performance measures, Orange County's average rates were higher than the statewide average rates for Employment Rate of Current CalWORKs Individuals and Post CalWORKs Employment Rate (for both cohorts one and two). Refer to Section 8, Part 1, Question 2 of this self-assessment for more details and for information regarding the Wage Progression performance measure.

For the Exit and Re-entries Analysis performance measures, Orange County's average rates for the periods reviewed were higher than the statewide average rates for the Rate of Exits with Earnings and Rate of Program Re-entries after Exit with Earnings performance measures and lower than the statewide average rate for the Rate of Program Re-entries. Refer to Section 9, Part 1, Question 2 of this self-assessment for more details.

As a result of COVID-19, Orange County's Wage Progression and Employment Rate metrics may be skewed for 2020 and 2021 more so than other counties. This is due to the fact that Orange County is a travel and tourism destination and those industries were impacted significantly by the pandemic, stay-at-home orders, and limited re-opening plans. As of January 2023, the Disneyland Resort (one of Orange County's largest employers) is still operating at limited capacity due to continued spread of COVID-19 and perception of safety risks from visitors. The Cal-OAR Team will be closely monitoring Wage Progression and Employment Rate for Orange County to determine if baseline metrics are accurate and reliable.

Additionally, the Agency's Employment Services Team is in the process of implementing Post-Aid Services for former CW/WTW participants. We are hoping that this implementation will have similar positive impacts as the Early Engagement Project did in 2015.

3. Agency, partnership, and programmatic strengths and challenges.

The Agency's size and structure provide many benefits to the CalWORKs program including strong administrative teams and high-quality deliverables. The Agency's CalWORKs offices are co-located with the Agency's Assistance Programs division as well as contracted partners to create a one-stop-shop for clients to access a variety of services at once. Current and previous partnerships have helped the Agency by adding more staff, training, and technology resources to our programs and have created the ability for the Agency to respond faster to community needs.

The Agency's size and structure, however, allows for specializations in work functions which can lead to less familiarity during case transfers between staff of different work functions. Turnover of contracted service providers based on government contracting requirements and Request for Proposal Guidelines has also been observed. These areas create opportunities for the Agency to continue to seek improvement.

Refer to Section 1, Part 1 and Section 1, Part 4 of this self-assessment for more information about these strengths and challenges.

4. Areas identified for focused improvement, initial improvement strategies, and next steps for Cal-SIP development.

Orange County is considering focusing on further increasing performance for Initial and Ongoing Engagement (refer to the response to Section 10, Part 1, Question 1 of this self-assessment).

The Cal-OAR Team has observed strong collaboration and processes within the Agency and traditional partners; however, our leadership has identified opportunities to go beyond our normal stakeholders and gather more information at a community level.

Top priorities for the Cal-OAR Team will consist of:

- Identifying level of impact and effort for each recommended strategy,
- Validating findings with partners and collaborators,
- Researching disparities within sub demographics,
- Expanding our partner and collaborator relationships to strengthen our partnerships, and
- Bringing in clients and other community organizations to the Cal-OAR discussion.

Efforts from these priorities will be used to finalize Orange County's Cal-SIP goals and strategies.

5. Progress, challenges, and overall lessons learned since the previous Cal-OAR (not applicable during first Cal-OAR cycle).

Not applicable during the 2021-2026 Cal-OAR cycle.