

# Tiger Team Update: Status Report 1

## Tiger Team on Work Participation Rates

TANF Reauthorization occurred with 2005 Budget Reconciliation Act and resulted in a few key changes to federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) guidelines, the major being the increased number of individuals considered work eligible. This presents a challenge for States and counties to meet the federal work participation rate (WPR), which is used in the determination of federal funding for TANF programs like CalWORKs. A group of stakeholders met from August to October 2006 to address the challenge of engaging more people to participate in work activities and to develop a Road Map to Action. This stakeholder group included community advisory board members, advocates, educational institutions, employer representatives, and various divisions and regions from the Health and Human Services Agency. Reauthorization of the TANF program established the following targets be met by states:

- **50% of single parent families to participate in work or work activities 30 hours per week, and**
- **90% of two parent families to participate in work or work activities 35 hours per week.**



**The Agency got on the road to action following the Tiger Team meetings.**

Because federal funding is based on states' ability to meet these targets, it is critical that San Diego be proactive to meet the requirements. The Agency began the task of turning the excellent ideas listed on the Road Map into **action** items. At this time, we would like to provide you with a status report of our efforts to implement.

## What did the Road Map Call For?

The initial Road Map to Action called for a 3-pronged strategy to increase the Work Participation Rate, including:

- 1. Screenings** – improving our evaluation for diversion (one-time assistance for new CalWORKs applicants) and the assessment of employment barriers for Welfare to Work (WTW) participants.
- 2. Supportive Services** – providing access to support networks, such as mentor programs and group mental health services designed to assist WTW participants, particularly those with barriers to self-sufficiency.
- 3. County-Employer Agreement** – ensuring that the Agency is speaking the same language as our employer partners in what constitutes being “work ready” and working with our workforce development partners to provide programs that are preparing participants for work.

The Agency also took some additional actions based on instructions from the State in an effort to make our local WTW program as successful as possible—those actions are also detailed in this status report.

## Progress to date on Implementing the Road Map

Since the conclusion of the Tiger Team meetings in October 2006, Agency staff have been implementing the ideas generated. Specific accomplishments to date include:

### Screening



Screening

- **Improving our current diversion program** - the Agency developed a Request for Information (RFI) to solicit ideas for a potential consulting contract to review and improve our local diversion policies. A Request for Proposals is now being developed to secure a contract for Fiscal Year 07-08.
- **Adopting a new behavioral health screening tool** - Agency Behavioral Health Services developed and tested a new behavioral health screening tool to be used in assessing barriers of WTW participants. This tool was issued to behavioral health counselors for use on 100% of participants referred to WTW.

### Supportive Services



Supportive  
Services

- **Co-locating more services** - Agency Behavioral Health Services will pilot a special drop-in Mental Health program at the 54th Street WTW office. It is designed to serve individuals who are experiencing difficulties and want immediate support. This program will allow people to join group sessions to address specific life issues without a referral.
- **Enhancing our ability to re-engage sanctioned clients** - A best practice strategy for engaging sanctioned clients was shared with employment case management providers on mailing home visitation letters. Sanctioning of client removes and reduces their cash grant. These letters provide information to the participant about resolving their sanction (regaining their cash grant), directing them to supportive services and welcoming them back to the program. The letter was provided to WTW staff as a recommended tool for those who are currently sanctioned or who may be facing an impending sanction.

### County-Employer Agreement



County—  
Employer  
Agreement

- **Meeting the needs of employers** - The Agency (in conjunction with San Diego Workforce Partnership) hosted training for WTW front-line staff, WTW supervisors and One-Stop Center staff focusing on tailoring our programs to be more proactive and responsive to business needs. A trainer from the State Employment Development Department delivered two eight hour sessions that provided tools for improving our ability to broker the service needs of the local labor market. This was an important step in our efforts to work more effectively with local employers and our mission to strengthen the connection between WTW and our local One-Stop Centers, which are contracted by San Diego Workforce Partnership.
- **Collaborating with partners on getting participants "work-ready"** - CalWORKs program has made several presentations to our partners to explain the WPR, its importance to the County, and developing a common language associated with it. We have helped incorporate work participation activities into our partnerships with alcohol and drug services, mental health, community colleges, vocational training programs, and San Diego Workforce Partnership.

# State Activities

The new federal rules associated with TANF Reauthorization went into effect October 2006. Although states are accountable for work participation rates based on these new rules, California elected not to change the structure of the CalWORKs program to align with the federal rules. Despite the fact that the structure of the CalWORKs program has not changed, there have been several developments at the State level, including:

- **The elimination of durational sanctions.** Sanctioned clients no longer have to wait a mandatory period of time in order to resolve their WTW sanction. The expectation of this change is that sanctioned clients will comply with the program faster and count positively in our work participation rate.
- **Request for counties to update their CalWORKs Plans with strategies to maximize participation.** In January 2007, San Diego submitted our plan to the State for approval. Strategies developed from the Tiger Team meetings were incorporated into the San Diego CalWORKs Plan. Upon approval from the State, the Addendum will be posted to the State website and Tiger Team participants will receive a copy. County Plans are available at: [http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/CountyPlan\\_291.htm](http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/CountyPlan_291.htm)
- **Provision of an additional \$9 million dollars in budget for FY 06-07 for Community Colleges** to enable the colleges to increase their work study placements for CalWORKs students.
- **Governor Schwarzenegger issued his budget proposal for FY 07-08**, which included a \$40 million dollar Pay for Performance program to provide rewards to counties that improve participation in their WTW programs.



**Changes at the State level have also occurred**

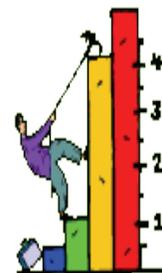
“If a state fails to meet the work participation rates, it is subject to a penalty equal to a 5 percent reduction of its federal TANF block grant. For California, the 5 percent penalty would be approximately \$173 million annually.”

*CA Legislative Analyst's Office 2006-2007 Budget Bill Analysis*

## Additional Local Activities

In addition to work on implementing the Road Map from the Tiger Team and responding to the changes at the State level, San Diego has done the following in response to the new more stringent WPR requirements:

- **Hosted Best Practices Forums** for our regional WTW providers highlighting what the local leaders in participation, employment and re-engagement do to improve their regional performance.
- **Restructured the CalWORKs WTW contracts** to maximize the emphasis on participation, employment and exits off of assistance due to employment.



**Communicating best practices to improve the WPR**

# Next Steps—Our Path Forward



In the next phase of the implementation of the Road Map to Action, CalWORKs Program staff and their partners hope to continue their efforts at maximizing the WPR by focusing on additional action items related to the themes of the Road Map. On the forecast are the following goals:

## Screening

- **Maximizing diversion** through a contract for consulting services so that we can explore ways to better serve families that only need short-term assistance.
- **Incorporating work participation activities** in our treatment services when possible and improving our ability to capture the information from our treatment providers.

## Supportive Services

- **Analyzing data related to cross-over families with Child Welfare Services (CWS)** to see how the CalWORKs WTW Program can best coordinate with CWS to provide services for these families.
- **Continuing our efforts to establish mentor programs** for our WTW families to strengthen the support network for our participants working towards self-sufficiency.

## County—Employer Agreement

- **Strengthening the relationships between regional WTW staff and the San Diego Workforce Partnership** to maximize our efforts to develop a workforce for San Diego that meets the needs of our area employers and results in more families that are employed and self-sufficient.

*In addition to these specific tasks, the CalWORKs team will continue to work with the State on implementing the new TANF rules and on reporting our local work participation rate.*

*We are committed to continue to keep you informed on the progress of our implementation of the Tiger Team Road Map to Action.*

*If you have questions or comments, email [Jaye.Yoshonis@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Jaye.Yoshonis@sdcounty.ca.gov)*