

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES
GAIN SANCTION HOME VISIT OUTREACH PROJECT
September 2008**

BACKGROUND

In California, adult cash aid recipients, unless exempt, must participate in CalWORKs welfare-to-work activities and meet program requirements as a condition of receiving aid. When a participant fails or refuses to meet GAIN program requirements, GAIN Services Workers (GSW) initiate noncompliance activities, which result in a GAIN sanction if the noncompliance issues are not resolved.

A report by the Los Angeles County Chief Administrative Office's Service Integration Branch – Urban Research Division, “**Study of Sanctions Among CalWORKs Participants in the County of Los Angeles: Who, When, and Why?**”, identified areas that need to be addressed by the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) in its welfare-to-work GAIN Program. In response to the findings, DPSS developed a Sanction Action Plan through a collaborative process involving managers from throughout DPSS and key partners from other County departments, service providers, advocates, and the Commission for Public Social Services. A few of the key findings in the report which were addressed in the Sanction Action Plan are:

- Almost two-thirds of sanctioned Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) participants are sanctioned before participating in any welfare-to-work activity, primarily for failure to attend orientation; and
- The most prevalent reasons identified for this failure to participate are lack of adequate transportation and child care and failure to receive notifications in a timely manner.

Pursuant to the report and through a collaborative internal and external process, various strategies from computer modifications to proactive outreach to GAIN participants were developed. A major strategy of the Sanction Action Plan is the GAIN Sanction Home Visit Outreach (GSHVO) project.

GAIN SANCTION HOME VISIT OUTREACH PROJECT (GSHVO)

The GSHVO project was implemented on October 31, 2005 in the five DPSS-operated regions. Its primary focus was on participants who had previously been identified with a specialized supportive services (SSS) need (i.e., mental health and/or substance abuse). Effective December 1, 2005, the GSHVO project was expanded to serve the general GAIN population (i.e., those with and without an SSS need) in the five non-contracted regions. Effective March 2006, the two contracted regions were added to the GSHVO project, completing Countywide implementation of the project. Initially, the number of staff allocated for the project included 63 GSWs for all seven regions. Based on the project's success, it was expanded in November 2006, and a total 99 staff were allocated to the project Countywide.

The GAIN Sanction Home Visit Outreach (GSHVO) project provides outreach to participants who do not comply with welfare-to-work requirements and are at risk of incurring a financial sanction or are currently sanctioned. The outreach is to enable a participant to cure his/her noncompliance/sanction, engage in welfare-to-work activities and access needed GAIN services. The project's strategy involves telephone contacts, home visit appointment letters,

home visits, and post-resolution follow-up activities by GSHVO staff. To ensure the project is successful, program staff conducts site visits to the GAIN Regional Offices, provides training, conducts monitoring, and completes monthly reports to track and report performance.

Participants going into noncompliance/sanction are identified by the GAIN computer system daily. Telephone contacts are initiated ten days later (because many participants resolve issues on their own and do not need this intervention). If telephone contact is unsuccessful, a letter is mailed informing the participant of a home visit date and time. The participant has the option to refuse the home visit. If the participant does not respond to the attempted telephone calls, a home visit is scheduled. When contact is established either by telephone or home visit, the GSHVO GSW completes the following activities: 1) provides information on services offered by GAIN, including Specialized Supportive Services (SSS); 2) identifies the reasons for noncompliance; 3) educates the participant on the noncompliance/sanction process; 4) identifies steps needed to cure the noncompliance/sanction; 5) negotiates a resolution; and, 6) makes necessary referrals, as needed.

UPCOMING ENHANCEMENTS

Two enhancements to the GSHVO project are planned later this year:

- For cases without a completed GAIN Appraisal in the last year, the GSHVO GSW will assume responsibility for completing the GAIN Appraisal, scheduling the Orientation/Job Club/Assessment appointment, and initiating child care services.
- Cases in sanction status over 90 days will receive extended outreach activities. The activities include: 1) telephone calls, 2) home visits during non-traditional hours, 3) interviewing the participant during the CalWORKs annual redetermination.

DATA COLLECTION & REPORTING

The GSHVO project employs data collection and reporting techniques among all the GAIN Regions. Project oversight, performance, and analysis are performed on an ongoing basis. Monthly reports from the GAIN Regions are validated and finalized. Site visits to the GAIN Regions provide an avenue for discussion and discovery of best practices to be integrated into the project. GSHVO staff is provided with the opportunity to participate in the project's changes and/or modifications.

RESULTS

The goal of the GSHVO project is to serve GAIN participants more effectively through outreach. As illustrated in Chart #1 on page 3, the GSHVO project data for the period of November 2005 through July 2008 reflects that project staff contacted over 165,956 participants. Of this number, over 120,100 or 72% resulted in success, with agreements to participate, exemptions granted, good cause determinations, and other outcomes which resulted in resolving the noncompliance and/or sanction. The resolutions by category and percentages are reflected in Chart #2 on page 3.

RESULTS OF SANCTION ACTION PLAN

With the implementation of DPSS' Sanction Action Plan and GSHVO, the number of sanctioned cases has been reduced considerably. Since the Plan's implementation in August 2005, the number of sanctions has been reduced by 10,105 or 47%. Chart #3 reflects this dramatic reduction.

Chart #1
Los Angeles County - GSHVO Project Results
November 2005 through July 2008

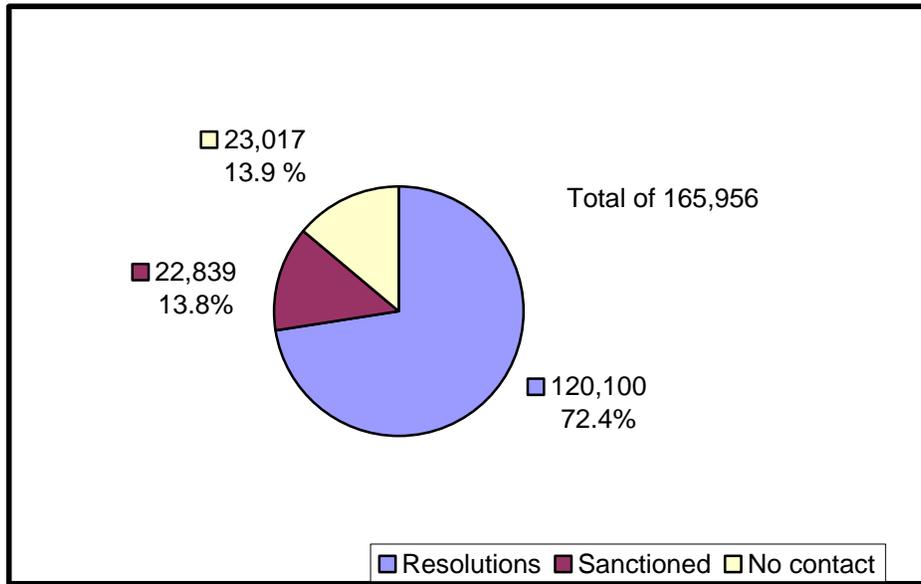


Chart #2
Los Angeles County - GSHVO Resolutions
November 2005 through July 2008

ACTIVITY	CASES	PERCENTAGE
No contact (not home, incorrect address)	23,017	13.9%
Opted for a sanction	22,839	13.8%
Resolutions (see detail below)	120,100	72.4%
Total cases	165,956	100.0%
RESOLUTIONS BY CATEGORY	CASES	PERCENTAGE
Agree to participate	37,146	30.9%
Good Cause	36,957	30.8%
Exempt	14,256	11.9%
Employment	11,737	9.8%
Homeless	5,980	5.0%
Cash Aid/GAIN case terminated	8,496	7.1%
GSW error	3,140	2.6%
System error	1,679	1.4%
Other	709	0.6%
Totals	120,100	100.0%

Chart #3
Los Angeles County
GAIN Program Division
GAIN Sanctions
July 2005 through July 2008

