

Background: General Description of CalWORKs

The Welfare to Work (WtoW) Act of 1997 is California's version of TANF. It established the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Program. CalWORKs replaced the AFDC program that entitled recipients to aid with a program that

Assures that welfare is a temporary support in time of crisis, rather than a way of life;
Encourages and rewards personal responsibility and accountability by recipients;

Fosters a "Work-First" attitude by strict work requirements; and Gives counties the flexibility they need to meet recipients' needs.

In order to change welfare from a way of life to a temporary program for those in crisis, time limits are imposed to move recipients off aid as quickly as possible and into self-sufficiency.

- The lifetime limit for cash aid applies to all adult CalWORKs recipients.
- The 60-month clock is a cumulative clock that starts in the first month an individual receives cash aid after December 31, 1997 and adds each additional month of aid, stopping and starting where it left off if there is a break in aid.
- Non-Exempt Adults are removed from the Assistance Unit (AU) after they have received aid for 60 cumulative months.
- Children continue to receive cash assistance, if otherwise eligible.

Welfare-to-Work Sequence and Detail Summary

The Welfare-to-Work (WtoW) Program is the employment and training portion of CalWORKs and is designed to enable participants to achieve self-sufficiency through employment. It is the policy of both the State and the county that all adults mandated to participate in WtoW is referred in a timely manner and that the activities assigned to participants are meaningful and lead to self-sufficiency through employment.

Participation in WtoW is either mandatory or voluntary, and CalWORKs Human Services Specialist (HSS) staff makes that determination. This occurs at the initial intake and every time there is a change in the employability status of an aided parent/caretaker. When referral to WtoW is appropriate, HSS staff has the responsibility to:

Once clients are referred to the WtoW Program, whether voluntary or mandated, they are guided through a series of ordered steps. Throughout the process, both HSS and employment staff work together to assist the participant in achieving success in the program activities assigned to them. Both HSS and employment staff have important roles in ensuring that WtoW participants are provided with information that helps them in arranging childcare so that they can be successful in assigned WtoW activities.

WTW Sanction Policy and Procedure

State regulations require that financial sanctions be applied when a mandatory Welfare-to-Work (WtoW) participant has failed or refused to comply with program requirements without good cause and compliance efforts have failed. Sanctions do not apply to participants who are:

1. • Exempt from WtoW requirements; and are
2. • Voluntarily participating in the WtoW program.

Financial sanctions for failing or refusing to comply with program requirements without good cause result in a reduction in the family's grant by removing the noncomplying family member from the Assistance Unit (AU) until the noncomplying individual performs the activity/activities he/she previously refused or failed to perform, or performs another appropriate activity as determined by the Employment Case Manager (ECM).

Note: In all instances the participant must perform the activity as determined by the ECM until completed or up to a maximum of 30 calendar days, whichever is shorter, from the date the curing plan is signed.

If a participant demonstrates good cause, or agrees to and successfully completes a Compliance Plan, the sanction is to be rescinded, not cured. When determining the instances of sanction ECMs must consider the following:

1. • A rescinded sanction or a sanction that was given good cause prior to the discontinuance date is not counted as a sanction when a new sanction is imposed in the future.
2. • Any sanction imposed prior to April 1998 is a GAIN sanction and is not to be considered as part of a client's WtoW Sanction history.

Note: Any instance of noncompliance without good cause will result in a financial sanction, without an associated level or minimum sanction period. CW recipients may cure a WtoW sanction [at any time](#), regardless of the number of times they have been sanctioned. An individual may contact a WtoW office and request to cure his/her sanction without having to wait a minimum sanction period.