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**WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE - WIC**

**DIVISION 9. PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES [10000 - 18999.98]** ( Division 9 added by Stats. 1965, Ch. 1784. )

**PART 3. AID AND MEDICAL ASSISTANCE [11000 - 15771]** ( Part 3 added by Stats. 1965, Ch. 1784. )

**CHAPTER 2. California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Act [11200 - 11526.5]** ( Heading of Chapter 2 amended by Stats. 1997, Ch. 270, Sec. 49. )

**ARTICLE 9. Evaluation of CalWORKs Program Implementation [11520 - 11523.7]** ( Article 9 added by Stats. 1997, Ch. 270, Sec. 158. )

**11520.** The State Department of Social Services shall ensure that a comprehensive, independent statewide evaluation of the CalWORKs program is undertaken and that accurate evaluative information is made available to the Legislature in a timely fashion.  
(Added by Stats. 1997, Ch. 270, Sec. 158. Effective August 11, 1997. Operative January 1, 1998, by Sec. 183 of Ch. 270.)

**11520.3.** The department shall develop a research design to ensure a thorough evaluation of the direct and indirect effects of the CalWORKs program. Effects shall include, but not be limited to, employment, earnings, self-sufficiency, child care, child support, child well-being, family structure, and impacts on local government. Child well-being shall include entries into foster care, at-risk births, school achievement, child abuse reports, and rates of child poverty.  
(Added by Stats. 1997, Ch. 270, Sec. 158. Effective August 11, 1997. Operative January 1, 1998, by Sec. 183 of Ch. 270.)

**11520.5.** The statewide evaluation shall be conducted by an independent evaluator or evaluators. It shall represent a clear delineation of the research questions and shall, through discrete reports issued at regular intervals, provide information regarding process, impacts, and analyses of the costs and benefits of the CalWORKs program.  
(Added by Stats. 1997, Ch. 270, Sec. 158. Effective August 11, 1997. Operative January 1, 1998, by Sec. 183 of Ch. 270.)

**11520.7.** The department shall ensure that county demonstration projects and other innovative county approaches to CalWORKs program implementation are independently and rigorously evaluated and that findings are reported to the Legislature in a timely fashion. The evaluation of a county-specific program shall be developed in conjunction with the county and other appropriate agencies responsible for the local program.  
(Added by Stats. 1997, Ch. 270, Sec. 158. Effective August 11, 1997. Operative January 1, 1998, by Sec. 183 of Ch. 270.)

**11521.3.** Evaluation of CalWORKs program implementation conducted or commissioned by the department shall, to the extent practical, use or build upon existing welfare data archives, including, but not limited to, the data bases and research completed to date as part of the Work Pays Demonstration Project authorized pursuant to Chapter 97 of the Statutes of 1992.  
(Added by Stats. 1997, Ch. 270, Sec. 158. Effective August 11, 1997. Operative January 1, 1998, by Sec. 183 of Ch. 270.)

**11521.5.** The department shall have access and authority to obtain for tracking, monitoring, research and evaluation purposes to data collected by counties on recipients receiving cash aid, in-kind payments, or supportive services.  
(Added by Stats. 1997, Ch. 270, Sec. 158. Effective August 11, 1997. Operative January 1, 1998, by Sec. 183 of Ch. 270.)

**11522.** The department, in conjunction with participating representatives of counties and the Legislature, shall develop approaches to improving data collection and management information reporting in the CalWORKs program.  
(Added by Stats. 2005, Ch. 78, Sec. 28. Effective July 19, 2005.)

**11523.** (a) This section shall be known and may be cited as the CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review Act of 2017.

(b) The State Department of Social Services shall establish, by July 1, 2019, the California CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review (Cal-OAR) to facilitate a local accountability system that fosters continuous quality improvement in county CalWORKs programs and in the collection and dissemination by the department of best practices in service delivery. The Cal-OAR shall cover CalWORKs services provided to current and former recipients, including those who are in sanction or exempt status or who are unengaged, and shall include the programmatic elements that each county offers as part of its CalWORKs service array as well as any local program components, and shall consist of performance indicators, a county CalWORKs self-assessment process, and a county CalWORKs system improvement plan. For purposes of this section, "CalWORKs services" shall include welfare-to-work, family stabilization, housing support, and post-employment job retention services.

(c) (1) (A) By October 1, 2017, the department shall convene a workgroup comprised of representatives from county human services agencies, legislative staff, interested welfare advocacy and research organizations, current and former CalWORKs recipients, organizations that represent county human services agencies and county boards of supervisors, representatives of community colleges, tribal organizations, and the workforce investment system, and any other state entities that the department deems necessary. The workgroup members shall also include individuals with expertise related to domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental health. The workgroup shall establish a workplan by which the Cal-OAR shall be conducted, pursuant to the provisions described in this section, including a process for qualitative peer reviews of counties' CalWORKs services. The workgroup shall discuss potential costs for state and county participation.

(B) The department shall report annually to the Subcommittee on Health and Human Services of the Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review and the Subcommittee on Health and Human Services of the Assembly Committee on Budget during the budget process with an update on the schedule for development of and future changes to the Cal-OAR.

(2) At a minimum, in establishing the work plan, the workgroup shall consider existing CalWORKs performance indicators being measured, additional, alternative, or additional and alternative process and outcome indicators to be measured, development of uniform elements of the county CalWORKs self-assessment and the county CalWORKs system improvement plans, timelines for implementation, recommendations for reducing the existing CalWORKs services data reporting burden in light of new requirements established by the act that added this section and the resulting Cal-OAR, recommendations for financial incentives to counties for achievement on performance measures, and an analysis of the county and state workload associated with implementation of the requirements of this section.

(d) The Cal-OAR shall consist of the following three components: performance indicators, a county CalWORKs self-assessment, and a county CalWORKs system improvement plan.

(1) (A) The Cal-OAR performance indicators shall be consistent with programmatic goals for the CalWORKs program, and shall include both process and outcome measures. These measures shall be established in order to provide baseline and ongoing information about how the state and counties are performing over time and to inform and guide each county human services agency's CalWORKs self-assessment and CalWORKs system improvement plan.

(i) Process measures shall include measures of participant engagement, CalWORKs service delivery, and participation. Specific process measures shall be established by the department, in consultation with the workgroup, and may include measures of engagement as shown by improvement in program participation, timeliness of service provision, rates of utilization of program components, such as vocational education, and referrals and utilization of services based upon recommendations from the Online CalWORKs Appraisal Tool.

(ii) Outcome measures shall include measures of employment, educational attainment, program exits, and program reentries, and may include other indicators of family and child well-being as determined by the department, in consultation with the workgroup.

(B) Performance indicator data available in existing county data systems shall be collected by counties and provided to the department, and performance indicator data available in existing state department data systems shall be collected by the department and provided to the counties. These data shall be reported in a manner and on a schedule to be determined by the department, in consultation with the workgroup, but no less frequently than semiannually.

(C) (i) During the first five-year Cal-OAR cycle, performance indicator data, as reported by each county, shall be used to establish both county and statewide baselines for each of the process measures. After the first review cycle, the department shall, in consultation with the workgroup, establish standard target thresholds for each of the process measures established by the workgroup.

(ii) The department, in consultation with the workgroup, shall develop a process for resolving any disputes regarding the establishment of standard process thresholds pursuant to clause (i).

(D) For subsequent reviews, and based upon availability of additional data from enhancements to the Statewide Automated Welfare System or through interagency data-sharing agreements, the workgroup shall convene, as necessary, to consider whether to establish additional performance indicators that support the programmatic goals for the CalWORKs program. Any

additional performance indicators established shall also be subject to the process described in subparagraph (C) and include consideration of when data on the additional performance indicators would be available for reporting, if not already available.

(E) If, during subsequent reviews, there is sufficient reason to establish statewide performance standards for one or more outcome measures, the department may, in consultation with the workgroup, establish those standards for each of the agreed-upon outcome measures. In making a determination as to whether there is sufficient reason to establish performance standards for any outcome measure, the department shall consider whether all counties could reasonably be expected to meet those standards given local variability in employment opportunities, availability of services, demographics, educational opportunities, and funding, among other things.

(2) (A) The county CalWORKs self-assessment component of the Cal-OAR, as established by the workgroup, shall require the county human services agencies to assess their performance on the established process and outcome measures that comprise the performance indicators, identify the strengths and weaknesses in their current practice and resource deployment, identify and describe how local operational decisions and systemic factors affect program outcomes, and consider areas of focus that may be included in the county CalWORKs system improvement plan, as described in paragraph (3). The county CalWORKs self-assessment process shall be designed to identify areas of best practices for replication and for system improvement at the county level, and shall guide the development of the county CalWORKs system improvement plan, as described in paragraph (3). To the extent a county identifies eligibility procedures and practices that it determines, through its self-assessment, contribute to its achievement on process and outcome measures related to CalWORKs services, the county may, at its option, incorporate eligibility-related elements into its system improvement plan.

(B) (i) The county CalWORKs self-assessment process shall be completed every five years by the county in consultation and collaboration with local stakeholders and submitted to the department.

(ii) Local stakeholders shall include county CalWORKs administrators, supervisors, and caseworkers; current and former CalWORKs recipients; and county human services agency partners. To the extent possible and relevant, local stakeholders shall also include representatives of community colleges, tribal organizations, and the local workforce board. Additional specific county human services agency partners shall be determined by the county and may include, but are not limited to, adult education providers, providers of services for survivors of domestic violence, the local housing continuum of care, county behavioral health departments, county drug and alcohol programs, community-based service providers, organizations that represent CalWORKs recipients, child care resource and referral programs, and alternative payment programs, as appropriate.

(3) (A) (i) The county CalWORKs system improvement plan shall consist of uniform elements to be developed by the workgroup. It shall, at a minimum, describe how the county will improve its CalWORKs program performance in strategic focus areas based upon information learned through the county CalWORKs self-assessment process. The county CalWORKs system improvement plan shall be approved in public session by the county's board of supervisors or, as applicable, chief elected official, and submitted to the department.

(ii) The county CalWORKs system improvement plan shall be completed every five years by the county, approved in public session by the county's board of supervisors or, as applicable, chief elected official, and be submitted to the department.

(B) The county CalWORKs system improvement plan shall include a peer CalWORKs services review element, the purpose of which shall be to provide additional insight and technical assistance by peer counties for each county.

(C) Strategic focus areas for the county CalWORKs system improvement plan shall be determined by the county, informed by the county CalWORKs self-assessment process, as described in paragraph (2), with targets for improvement based upon what is learned in the county CalWORKs self-assessment process.

(D) The county human services agency shall complete an annual progress report on the status of its submitted system improvement plan and shall submit these reports to the department. The department, in consultation with the workgroup, shall develop uniform elements of the progress report.

(e) (1) The department shall receive, review, and, based on its determination of the county CalWORKs system improvement plan meeting the required elements identified in subparagraph (A) of paragraph (3) of subdivision (d), certify as complete all county-submitted performance indicator data, county CalWORKs self-assessments, county CalWORKs system improvement plans, and annual progress reports, and shall identify and promote the replication of best practices in CalWORKs service delivery to achieve the established process and outcome measures.

(2) The department shall monitor, on an ongoing basis, county performance on the measures developed pursuant to subdivision (d).

(3) The department shall make data collected pursuant to this section publicly available on its internet website.

(4) The department shall, on an annual basis, submit a report to the Legislature that summarizes county performance on the established process and outcome measures during the reporting period, analyzes county performance trends over time, and makes findings and recommendations for common CalWORKs services improvements identified in the county CalWORKs self-assessments and county CalWORKs system improvement plans, including information on common statutory, regulatory, or fiscal barriers identified as inhibiting system improvements and any recommendations to overcome those barriers.

(5) (A) The department shall facilitate the provision of, and provide as appropriate, technical assistance to county human services agencies as part of the peer review that supports the county's selected areas for improvement as described in its system improvement plan.

(B) If, in the course of its review of county CalWORKs system improvement plans and annual updates, or, in the course of its review of regularly submitted performance indicator data, the department determines that a county is consistently failing to make progress toward its strategic focus areas for improvement or is consistently failing to meet the process measure standard target thresholds established pursuant to subparagraph (C) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (d), the department shall engage the county in a process of targeted technical assistance and support to address and resolve the identified shortcomings. If, after the assistance is provided, the county continues in its failure to meet its goals or performance thresholds, the department may engage in corrective action with the county.

(f) A county shall execute and fulfill components of its CalWORKs system improvement plan that can be accomplished with existing resources.

(g) A county shall not be required to execute and fulfill any components of its CalWORKs system improvement plan that creates new county costs, unless funding for those costs are appropriated in the annual Budget Act.

(h) The implementation of the Cal-OAR continuous quality improvement components, including county self-assessments, system improvement plans, peer reviews, progress reports, and data validation shall be optional to counties during the 2020–21 fiscal year.

(i) Beginning in the 2019–20 fiscal year, and for each fiscal year thereafter, no more than two million dollars (\$2,000,000) from the General Fund shall be appropriated in the annual Budget Act to counties to complete the requirements described in subdivision (c).

*(Amended by Stats. 2020, Ch. 11, Sec. 67. (AB 79) Effective June 29, 2020.)*

**11523.1.** The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) It is the intent of the Legislature to make the CalWORKs program the most effective family antipoverty program in the country. California continues to be a national leader in total caseload, provision of cash assistance, welfare-to-work services, and assistance for children. California is a national leader in improving the quality of life for CalWORKs families, including the elimination of the "maximum family grant rule," as described in subparagraph (A) of paragraph (4) of subdivision (a) of Section 11450.025, and the commitment to ending deep poverty among all CalWORKs families.

(b) Beginning in the 2019–20 fiscal year and continuing through the 2023–24 fiscal year, California embarks on the first cycle of a new CalWORKs innovation, the CalWORKs Outcome and Accountability Review (Cal-OAR) system. Cal-OAR establishes a local, data-driven program management system that facilitates continuous improvement of county CalWORKs programs by collecting, analyzing, and disseminating outcomes and best practices. This system will help achieve the state's goals of ensuring that CalWORKs families receive the best possible services and supports to improve their lives and will also help the state meet federal work participation rates by emphasizing quality and engagement.

(c) At the same time, county human services agencies are transforming the welfare-to-work process away from a compliance-oriented and work-first model into a modern, science-based, and goal-oriented welfare-to-work model known locally as CalWORKs 2.0. The success of this approach depends on a culture shift away from compliance-oriented, directive case management and toward supportive and responsive interactions between the case manager and the customer. Case management emphasizes coaching that allows clients to naturally develop accountability by setting and achieving their goals. Case managers in CalWORKs 2.0 have a framework to provide customers a trajectory from stability, to upskilling, to employment.

(d) Cal-OAR and the county CalWORKs 2.0 initiative are bold steps toward a better CalWORKs program, yet state law has not been updated to be consistent with the new approaches.

*(Amended by Stats. 2020, Ch. 11, Sec. 69. (AB 79) Effective June 29, 2020.)*

**11523.4.** (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(1) The Legislature has taken numerous steps in recent years to improve the CalWORKs program for the families who rely on it. These changes have moved California towards a more modern and compassionate approach to alleviating family poverty, and are grounded in awareness of the social determinants of health, adverse childhood experiences, and the neurotoxicity and trauma of intergenerational poverty.

(2) County human services departments have led a redesign of the welfare-to-work program, known as CalWORKs 2.0, over the past five years. CalWORKs 2.0 is based on input gathered from program participants, employment services staff, and other stakeholders, as well as recent behavioral science research. The redesigned approach to welfare-to-work engagement focuses on mutual engagement between county staff and clients, that helps families set and achieve personalized goals directly relevant to their lives. This approach requires more individualized case management, tailored to families' and individuals' needs and strengths.

(3) The Legislature adopted a new CalWORKs Outcome and Accountability Review (Cal-OAR) system in 2017. Cal-OAR establishes a locally focused, data-driven program management system that facilitates continuous improvement of county CalWORKs programs by collecting, analyzing, and disseminating outcomes and best practices. Cal-OAR has the potential to transform the CalWORKs program from one which focuses on work participation as the primary measure of success to one which measures a wide variety of real-life, participant-centered outcomes.

(4) The COVID-19 pandemic and the disproportionate health and economic impacts of the pandemic on low-income persons, exacerbated within communities of color, make it even more clear how urgent and necessary implementation of CalWORKs 2.0 and Cal-OAR principles are in helping impoverished families and people of color, who are disproportionately represented in the program.

(5) Cal-OAR implementation efforts were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the state is now entering a phase that will allow reengagement in employment services activities as well as a renewed focus on the CalWORKs 2.0 and Cal-OAR structures.

(b) It is the intent of the Legislature that all of the following are accomplished:

(1) To restart robust conversations around CalWORKs 2.0 and Cal-OAR and set an implementation timeline, including consideration of recommendations made in February 2020 by a legislatively mandated Cal-OAR workgroup. This effort should include development of training and resources for county CalWORKs staff in order to implement the necessary culture change within CalWORKs.

(2) To assist counties in developing and implementing training and resources for county CalWORKs staff, to reflect the racial, ethnic and cultural diversity of our families and communities in California and to promote equity and inclusion in CalWORKs policy and practice. Understanding and building on the steps counties have already taken in this regard is important to further building on that work statewide.

(3) To further the implementation of CalWORKs 2.0 and Cal-OAR statewide, it is the intent of the Legislature that the following steps will occur:

(A) Funding for intensive case management.

(B) Development of resources and training to assist counties in implementing program changes.

(C) Development of trauma-informed, anti-racist, and anti-stigma training for CalWORKs staff geared towards child and family well-being.

(c) It is the intent of the Legislature to consider approaches to the state's management of the federal work participation rate to diminish its negating effects on the intentional culture and program shift for the CalWORKs program.

*(Added by Stats. 2021, Ch. 85, Sec. 42. (AB 135) Effective July 16, 2021.)*

**11523.5.** (a) The State Department of Social Services shall convene and facilitate a Cal-OAR implementation steering committee (steering committee) no later than November 1, 2021. The steering committee shall make recommendations to the Legislature on how to implement Cal-OAR and CalWORKs 2.0 principles and practices statewide, and prioritize recommendations made by the Cal-OAR stakeholder group, by April 1, 2022. As part of the recommendations required pursuant to this subdivision, the steering committee shall provide its recommendations, including any recommendations for statutory amendments, and the reasons for these recommendations.

(b) The Cal-OAR implementation steering committee shall consist of representatives from the following organizations and stakeholders:

(1) The State Department of Social Services.

(2) The County Welfare Directors Association and its member county human services agencies.

(3) The exclusive representative of county CalWORKs staff.

(4) The Western Center on Law and Poverty.

(5) Parent Voices.

(6) Legislative staff.

(c) The steering committee may consult with other individuals, organizations, and entities as deemed appropriate for the purposes of implementing CalWORKs 2.0 and Cal-OAR.

*(Added by Stats. 2021, Ch. 85, Sec. 43. (AB 135) Effective July 16, 2021.)*

**11523.6.** (a) Subject to an appropriation of funds for this purpose in the annual Budget Act, the State Department of Social Services shall contract for the development of training for county CalWORKs staff. The department shall enter into one or more contracts to develop this training no later than July 1, 2022.

(b) The department shall consult with the County Welfare Directors Association of California, the exclusive representatives of county eligibility workers, client advocates, and other stakeholders, as deemed appropriate, in the development of this training. In developing the training, the department shall consider and draw upon, as appropriate, training and other materials already developed or in use by county human services agencies.

(c) The training required pursuant to subdivision (a) shall focus on all of the following:

(1) Resources to assist counties in implementing CalWORKs 2.0 and Cal-OAR and embedding these approaches into the program.

(2) Incorporating and building upon principles from CalWORKs 2.0, and relevant data from the Cal-OAR efforts, taking into account work counties have already accomplished in both areas of training focus.

(3) Acknowledging and addressing the intentional shift to a trauma-informed, anti-racist, anti-stigma, and implicit bias-aware culture and climate in the program, geared towards positive outcomes for child and family health and well-being.

(4) The impact of implicit bias, explicit bias, and systemic bias on public benefit programs and the effect this can have on individuals seeking eligibility for and services through public benefit programs.

(5) Actionable steps individuals can take to recognize and address their own implicit biases.

(d) The department shall work with the stakeholders listed in subdivision (b) to develop a plan for disseminating and delivering the training required pursuant to subdivision (a). This plan shall be shared with the Legislature no later than December 1, 2022. The plan shall include all of the following:

(1) The types and classifications of county staff who are to be trained and in what order the training of those staff should be prioritized.

(2) The entity or entities responsible for providing the training to counties, including consideration of providing direct training as well as train-the-trainer modes of training.

(3) The cost of providing the developed training to all identified staff in paragraph (1) in all counties.

(4) The proposed timeline for rolling out and implementing training in all counties.

(e) (1) Notwithstanding any other law, contracts established pursuant to this section shall be exempt from the personal services contracting requirements of Article 4 (commencing with Section 19130) of Chapter 5 of Part 2 of Division 5 of Title 2 of the Government Code, from the Public Contract Code and the State Contracting Manual, and shall not be subject to the approval of the Department of General Services, including provisions pursuant to Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 14825) of Part 5.5. of Division 3 of the Title 2 of the Government Code.

(2) Notwithstanding Section 11546 of the Government Code, contracts established pursuant to this section are exempt from review or approval of any division of the Department of Technology, upon approval from the Department of Finance.

*(Added by Stats. 2021, Ch. 85, Sec. 44. (AB 135) Effective July 16, 2021.)*

**11523.7.** Payments, as determined by the State Department of Social Services, made to individuals serving either as individual participants or as a participant on an advisory group created by the State Department of Social Services, or the California Health and Human Services Agency, or through a user testing exercise through a contractor, for the purposes of this article shall not be taken into account as income or resources for purposes of determining the eligibility of that individual, or any other individual, for benefits or assistance, or the amount or extent of benefits or assistance, under any state or local program.

