

# Welfare-to-Work

## Customer Guidebook



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Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors



Stanislaus County  
Community Services  
Agency



## **We Care About YOUR Goals**

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**MAKE choices to MEET Goals**

**OVERCOME your OBSTACLES**

**SUCCESS is STARTING**

**There is NO failure just FEEDBACK**

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**Make the MOST of your opportunities!**

*“Every part of the goal setting is part of the journey.”*

*-Kristian Tremmel*

### **What is CalWORKs?**

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CW) Program represent one of the State’s major efforts to assist low-income families, specifically families with children by providing a monthly cash grant to assist families in meeting their basic needs. Adults enrolled in CW are limited to a lifetime maximum of 60 months of assistance. Once adults reach this limit, the children in the case may continue to receive cash assistance. Adults receiving aid are generally required to participate in the Welfare-to-Work (WTW) Program to meet participation requirements.

### **What is Welfare-to-Work?**

The StanWORKs Welfare-to-Work (WTW) Program is designed to prepare adults for work and guide in finding a job so that they can support their family. Participants are not alone in this process. WTW Case Managers will assist with identifying family’s strengths, needs, setting employment goals, and working to develop a WTW Plan to meet goals. The WTW Program also helps to locate community resources and provide referrals to services that may be available to provide extra assistance to participants and the family.

### **What is a Welfare-to-Work Plan?**

The WTW Plan identifies employment goals and defines the steps that are needed in order to meet the goals. Participants and Case Managers will work together to develop the WTW Plan. As part of the planning process, participants will identify strengths as well as areas of concern. Participants will work with Case Managers to identify the resources available in order to successfully meet employment goals.

## Who Must Participate in Welfare-to-Work?

All adults in receipt of CW (who are not exempt) are considered mandatory participants, and must participate in the WTW Program. All mandatory participants must:

- Meet all WTW requirements
- Sign a WTW Plan
- Keep appointments and attend job interviews
- Be on time and dress appropriately
- Not quit a job or lower earnings without a good reason
- Provide proof of satisfactory progress in the assigned activity when required

Even if not required to participate, aided adults can ask to volunteer for WTW. Ask the Case Manager about the benefits of being a volunteer. All pregnant and parenting teens who are under the age of 20 must participate in the CW WTW Program. Teen parents who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent will be required to participate in WTW only to earn a high school diploma or equivalent.

CalWORKs 2.0/Next Generation



**Guiding one family at a time.**

“A year ago I set a goal for myself. I said, in a year I will have a good paying job, so I can buy myself a better car and make a future for my new baby girl. Well I don’t believe it but I really did it! I completed a training program. I am really proud of myself and able to say I completed something.”

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“Before I was in this program I had a dead end job, now I can say I have a good future. I was always in some kind of trouble or another. Through this program I grew up a lot.”

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“I came to this program very unsure of myself. I also had a lot of baggage that made it hard for me to find a job. Since I’ve been here I’ve built my confidence. I also get a chance to show my ability to be a hard worker and to use my new learned skills. I got a great job that has room for advancement, benefits, and good people to work with. From this program I made some good friends for life. Now I know what it takes to make it in this world.”

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## Success Story

*“When you choose to place yourself above all else and create boundaries contrary to the moments of life that have kept you from achieving, you create an orchestration of self-ownership. CalWORKs has been a chief foundation for me to implement choices that would create opportunity for my son and me. I was able to finish high school within a few months, obtain three associate degrees at MJC with Honors and on the President’s List, and am now graduating with Honors and Dean’s List. These milestones began in 2019. This was a choice to believe that I deserved social mobility. It was a choice to believe that as a woman of color, I would earn the spaces I navigate. Without CalWORKs, the professional caseworkers, county workers behind the scenes, and the faculty at each school, I would not have been able to believe I could succeed. Choose yourself, and the rest will follow.”*

## What Customers Say About Welfare-to-Work

"Being here and making friends helped me not forget but push aside my problems at home. I had to rearrange and adjust my life style to being on TANF. I found myself without a job and a single mom. The first check that I got from welfare was what I used to get weekly at my previous job and I had to make that last a whole month! I knew that I had to do something to get my life back on track. I was hired to work in May! I love my job and co-workers. I love my classmates and I especially love the person that I have become. Thanks to everyone who made this possible."

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"I am on welfare. I have been trying to get off. All the jobs that I was getting were fast food. I needed to further my experience in the food industry. I was really excited about being in this class. It was difficult in juggling the problems between home and kids and illness. I feel like I have gained some confidence in myself. I also learned that you can do anything you set your mind to. I have proven to my parents that I can do what I set out to do."

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"Having a battle with a drug addiction left me with a low self-esteem and very little confidence. But I was willing to take a chance and learn some new skills that might help me with a new career choice."

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"Just wanted to say all the training and self-motivation that everyone has given has helped me get back into the work force and now I have a full time job. This is the best thing that can happen to a person."

## Hours of Participation in Welfare-to-Work

Participation hours are based on Federal and State regulations, abilities, and individual family situations. It is a good idea to think of the weekly participation hours as if it were employment. The employer establishes a weekly work schedule and so will the WTW Program. The Case Manager will inform the participant specifically how many hours each week will need to spent in WTW activities. It is the participants responsibility to work or participate during the assigned hours. If the participant's schedule changes or different arrangements are needed, the participant must notify their Case Manager.

The minimum numbers of hours of participation are listed on the next page. Hours of participation can increase each week, as needed.



**Single Parent Families, with a child under 6 years old**  
**20 hours a week (minimum)**

Single parent WTW participant with children under six and are not exempt, will be asked to participate in WTW activities for a minimum of 20 hours a week.

**Single Parent Families, with no child under 6 years old**  
**30 hours a week (minimum)**

Single parent WTW participant with no children under six and are not exempt, will be asked to participate in WTW activities for a minimum of 30 hours a week.

**Two Parent Families**  
**35 hours a week (minimum)**

In a two-parent family that are not exempt, one or both parents must participate in WTW activities for a minimum of 35 hours per week. Both parents can choose to participate in WTW activities that would contribute towards the 35 hour participation requirement. One parent must participate a minimum of 20 hours per week if both parents are sharing the responsibility for meeting the 35 hour participation requirement.

**Welfare-to-Work Activities**

WTW activities are designed to help work towards employment goals and to assist with becoming self-sufficient. In order to meet the hourly WTW participation requirements for the household, participants may be required to participate in more than one activity at a time if it is consistent with the WTW plan. There are a variety of different activities available.

**To Ask for a Hearing:**

**In Writing:**

Fill out the form on the back of the Notice of Action (NA Back 9) or a written statement within 90 days of the date it was issued. Send the request to the County of Stanislaus at:

**Department of Social Services-Appeals Unit**  
**PO Box 42**  
**Modesto CA 95353-0042**

**In Person:**

Submit the request in person at the local Community Services Agency Office at:

**251 E.Hackett Road**  
**Modesto, CA 95358**

Or call the Case Manager for other locations.

**By phone:**

Call toll free 1-800-952-5253 or 1-800-952-8349 for TDD.

To ask about hearing rights or for free legal aid call or visit:

**CA Rural Legal Assistance**  
**1020 15th St #20**  
**Modesto, CA 95354**  
**(209) 577-3811**

### **Sanctions**

Financial sanctions only apply to mandatory participants. If a financial sanction is imposed, the following could apply:

- The family's cash aid will be reduced.
- If in receipt of CalFresh, the allotment may also be reduced.

### **Don't Agree with a County Action?**

At any time, a request for a State Hearing can be made when there is a disagreement with a County decision:

- A WTW sanction
- A WTW status
- A WTW activity
- A WTW supportive services payments

If participants would like to file a State Hearing and need assistance, the Case Manager will help. The WTW State Hearing Rights Form explains the rules. Requests for a copy of the form can be made at anytime.



All of the 20, 30, or 35 weekly participation hours will fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Work Experience
- Job Readiness Assistance
- Employment (part-time or full-time)
- On-the-Job Training
- Educational Activities:
  - ◊ Grant-Based On-the-Job Training
  - ◊ Supported Work or Transitional Employment
  - ◊ Work-Study
  - ◊ Vocational Training
  - ◊ Higher Education
  - ◊ High School Diploma or Equivalent
- Self-Employment
- Community Service
- Job Search
- Mental Health Counseling & Support
- Substance Abuse Counseling & Support
- Domestic Abuse Counseling & Support

### **Orientation/Appraisal & Online CalWORKs Appraisal Tool**

The Orientation/Appraisal and Online CalWORKs Appraisal Tool (OCAT) will provide a general introduction to the WTW Program to inform about the requirements, services and opportunities available. The OCAT is a one-on-one interview with the Case Manager during the appraisal. The OCAT features in-depth questions regarding work history, the family, substance usage, mental health, housing, transportation and career goals. This is centered on providing participants with an individualized plan for success in achieving self-sufficiency.

### **Job Readiness**

Job Readiness will educate about employer expectations and professionalism. It gives participants the opportunity to learn how to write or update a resume, practice preparing for interviews, and learn how to look for jobs in the current job market.

### **Assessment**

During an Assessment, participants and the Case Manager will work together to develop a WTW Action Plan. The plan will identify employment goals and the steps needed to help in reaching those goals. At this time, participants may also sign a WTW Plan Activity Agreement (WTW 2). The WTW 2 will specify the details of the activity, such as days, hours, and location.

### **Vocational Training/Self-Initiated Programs**

These are training programs for which participants may be eligible. Programs like these are generally designed to train and prepare participants to qualify for employment in a specific field. For example, the Accelerated Careers in Technology Program at Modesto Junior College is a vocational training program which has offered certificate courses in areas such as Automotive, Electrical, and Computer Technology to name a few. The programs offerings change from semester to semester - be sure to ask the Case Manager for more information.

### **Community Service/Subsidized Employment**

Community Service and the Subsidized Employment Program provide a chance to get on-the-job experience. This can be helpful whether it is the first time working or looking to get some new or more recent experience on a resume. Community Service can be done at a site of selection or of placement.

## **What Happens to Non-Participants?**

Participation in the WTW Program is mandatory for all CW recipients, unless exempt. If participation in the WTW Program drops or stops, the following steps will be taken:

### **Cause Determination**

If the participant does not meet the participation requirements, an appointment will be scheduled and the Case Manager will determine if it is a good reason or "Good Cause" for not participating. The Case Manager will send a notice that states there is a problem. Participants will meet with and/or call the Case Manager to discuss why they are not willing and/or able to participate. This is called a Cause appointment.

### **Conciliation Plan**

At the Cause appointment, the Case Manager will inform the participant whether the reason for not participating was determined to be Good Cause or not. If the reason is determined not to be Good Cause, the participant will have the opportunity to fix the situation. The Case Manager and the participant will work to develop a plan that will help get them back on track. This is called a "Conciliation Plan". If the requirements of the Conciliation Plan are met, then no penalties will be applied to the participant. If the Conciliation Plan requirements are not met, then there may be financial sanctions.



## **Good Reasons for Not Participating**

We recognize that participants may have a good reason for not signing their WTW Plan, for not participating in the WTW activities, not accepting a job offer or job referral, for quitting a job, or reducing their earnings. Some of the reasons for not participating may include:

- Age 60 or older
- Verified disability expected to last at least 30 days - Specific documentation must be received and approved.
- Care of an ill or disabled household member - Specific written verifications are required, prior to approval.
- Birth or adoption of a child - This is time-limited, so please ask the Case Manager for additional information. Does not apply to pregnant and/or parenting teens.
- Care of a child 0-23 months in age: This is a once-in-a-lifetime exemption and it must be pre-approved by the Case Manager.
- Pregnancy - If the pregnancy prevents from participation, this must be verified by a doctor. (This does not apply to pregnant and/or parenting teens.)
- Full-time volunteer for the VISTA Program
- Victims of Domestic Violence - This exemption is subject to specific circumstances. Please ask the Case Manager for details.

## **Employment**

If participants are employed and receiving cash assistance, employment hours will count towards participation requirements for the WTW Program. If the employment hours are less than the required hours of participation, additional approved WTW activities will be available to meet the participation requirements.

## **Behavioral Health Services**

Behavioral Health Services are confidential and absolutely free. The services can help with counseling related to domestic abuse, alcohol & drug abuse, parenting and mental health challenges. Participation in these services can be approved as one of the WTW activities and can count toward the required hours of participation.

## **High School Diploma and HSE Programs**

We encourage this activity for customers who do not have their high school diploma or a High School Equivalency (HSE). Job opportunities are much more plentiful for individuals who have earned their diploma or HSE. It is up to participants to choose which one of these best fits their needs. Nineteen year old custodial parents not already participating in the CalLearn Program will participate in HSE as their first and only WTW activity. WTW currently partners with agencies who offer both high school diploma and HSE options.

## **ARCH: Advocacy and Resources for Change**

ARCH is an intensive services program for families who are experiencing a crisis which prohibits or greatly impairs their ability to take part in WTW. The ARCH Program consists of a team of specialists who work with families to help them resolve or manage crisis. They offer close case management, increased contact, home visits, resources and referrals to services. Families who are accepted into the ARCH Program will participate in WTW services while being supported by ARCH services.

## Supportive Services

Supportive Services are designed to help with extra expenses that may be incurred while participating in the WTW Program. Talk to the Case Manager for assistance. Supportive services may include, but are not limited to the following:

### Transportation

The Case Manager will address transportation needs. WTW can potentially pay for either bus tickets or reimburse for mileage to and from approved WTW activities. Discuss transportation needs with the Case Manager. If the WTW activity requires travel out of Stanislaus County, prior approval will be needed from the Case Manager for assistance with any associated costs.

### Child Care

We know that the cost of child care may be a concern when participating in WTW activities. The StanWORKs Child Care Program can help with child care costs while in an approved WTW activity and/or while employed. The Case Manager can assist in applying for this program. For help in locating a child care provider, or for more information, please call the Stanislaus County Child Care Resource and Referral Program at **(209) 238-6400**.



## Other Expenses

The WTW Program can potentially pay for work or training-related costs for items such as books, tools, and clothing that are needed for the approved WTW activity. Be sure to let the Case Manager know immediately if assistance is needed with these expenses. Approval for requests can take several business days. Please do not make purchases without getting **prior approval** from the Case Manager.

## Who Does Not Have to Participate in WTW?

If a participant has an exemption, they do not have to participate in WTW activities. A WTW exemption may be granted due to age, school attendance, domestic abuse, medical or other potential reasons. All exemptions must be pre-approved by the Case Manager. If participation stops without approval from the Case Manager, participants may be subject to a financial sanction. Some exemptions require mandatory verification to be provided before they will be allowed. Please ask the Case Manager for more information.