LINKAGES
Planning Guide

Developed by
Kate Karpilow, Ph.D.
California Center for Research on Women and Families

October 2005
Dear Colleagues:

The Linkages Planning Guide culminates five years of dedicated effort by county, state and nonprofit leaders who collaborated during the first phase of the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project. What a journey!

The overriding goal that has united us has been our desire to help families involved in both CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services become self-sufficient and provide safe environments for their children.

We started from a simple observation: Families in crisis are not well served when faced with two service delivery systems, two sets of workers, two case plans, and sometimes conflicting goals and requirements.

For families involved in both CalWORKs and CWS, we learned that Linkages services can reduce the burdens of bureaucracy and heighten opportunities for success. Today, we know that when we work together, we work more effectively to help families succeed.

The goal of the Linkages Planning Guide is to share the philosophy of Linkages – and to provide county leaders throughout and beyond California with information about the specific approaches and tools that can help them plan and implement Linkages in their own communities. We do this by showcasing the incredible work of county leaders from the 13 Pioneer Counties who participated in the first phase of the Partnership Project.

The journey of the past five years would not have been possible without the support of the Stuart Foundation, which made a major philosophical and financial commitment to fund this multi-year initiative. Thanks especially to Pat Reynolds-Harris, former Program Officer, who launched the program, and Teri Kook, current Program Officer, who continued that support. Thanks also to leaders from the California Department of Social Services, the Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice, the Zellerbach Family Foundation, and the Central California Training Academy.

A special note of appreciation goes to the many county leaders who, despite the competing demands of downsized budgets, growing caseloads, and other initiatives, participated in months of work groups and led the way for two years as grantee counties. All of these leaders have been dedicated and delightful colleagues, and they have given real meaning to the name of our initiative, the “Partnership Project.”

Such a sustained effort would not have been possible without the commitment of a superlative group of professionals who provided outstanding training and technical assistance, and always cheered on the work of the Linkages counties. My profound thanks to Linda Orrante, Project Coordinator from the start of the Project through September 2004; Sarah Boehm, Coordinator of the Outcomes Project; and Alix Barbey, Research Assistant. Leslie Ann Hay of Hay Consulting also has our considerable thanks for her many contributions, as does Professor Jill Duerr Berrick and her team of evaluators.

The release of the Linkages Planning Guide marks the completion of the work from the first phase of the Partnership Project. Phase Two of the Partnership Project and beyond is under the direction of the Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC), an affiliate of the County Welfare Directors Association. We wish them well and thank them for taking on this important work.

We hope that you find the Linkages Planning Guide to be of value, and we once again thank our many partners – not only for their leadership, but also for their commitment to the families they serve.

Sincerely,

Kate Karpilow, Ph.D.
Executive Director
CCRWF
# Table of Contents

## Introduction ................................................................. 1

## Deciding to Launch Linkages ................................. 3

- Understand the Twin Philosophy of Linkages
- Confirm Leadership Commitment
- Commit to the Linkages Building Blocks
- Endorse the Linkages Work Plan Process

## Moving Ahead: How to Build Linkages ...................... 10

## Building Block #1: Policy Foundation ................. 11

- Establish a Strategic Direction
- Choose a Target Population
- Select a Coordinated Case Planning Model
- Identify Outcomes for Evaluation
  - Theory of Change
  - Outcomes and Indicators

## Building Block #2: Practice Protocols ............... 20

- Client Identification
- Confidentiality/Information-Sharing
- Coordinated Case Planning

## Building Block #3: Administration Building Block .... 26

- Project Management
  - Linkages Coordinator
  - Planning and Implementation Committee
  - Work Plan
  - Reports to Leadership and Partners
- Staff Training
  - Basic Orientation
  - Other Training Tools and Approaches
- Financing
  - Accounting Structure
  - Funding Sources
- Evaluation

## Conclusion ................................................................. 36

## Appendix ................................................................. 37

- Project History
- Linkages Tool Box
- For More Information on the Partnership Project

## End Notes ................................................................. 44
# LINKAGES TOOL BOXES & FIGURES

## Tool Boxes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool Boxes</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.  Strategic Direction.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.  Coordinated Case Planning Model.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.  Outcomes Evaluation: Planning.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.  Client Identification.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.  Confidentiality</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.  Coordinated Case Planning Protocols</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.  Project Management (includes Work Plan Tools)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.  Training</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.  Flexible Financing</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Outcomes Evaluation: Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting.</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. New Directions</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figures</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.  Benefits of Linkages.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.  Linkages Work Plan: Building Blocks &amp; Topic Areas</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.  Linkages Target Populations</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.  Features of Different Models of Coordinated Case Planning.</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.  Stanislaus County: Coordinated Case Planning Model.</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.  Comparing Uncoordinated and Coordinated Plans.</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.  Evaluation Steps from the Linkages Evaluation Guide.</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dedicated to the Linkages Coordinators
in the 13 Pioneer Counties –
leaders who dreamed new directions,
broke down barriers,
managed up, down, and sideways,
produced more protocols than humanly possible –
and always, always remembered the families they serve.
INTRODUCTION

This Linkages Planning Guide gathers into one place the leadership strategies and tested tools of state, county, and nonprofit leaders who worked to re-engineer CalWORKs¹ and Child Welfare Services (CWS) in 13 Pioneer Counties in the State of California.

The four-year effort, known as the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project, was funded by the Stuart Foundation, launched in partnership with the California Department of Social Services, and designed and directed by the California Center for Research on Women and Families (CCRWF). A second phase of the Partnership Project is now underway, directed by the Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC) and providing technical assistance to an additional 17 counties. (See the Appendix for more background information.)

The mission of the Partnership Project, also known as Linkages, has been to translate into practice the twin philosophy laid out by the visionary David Berns, former Director of Human Services in El Paso County, Colorado: that CalWORKs (or TANF) should serve as a child abuse prevention program, and that CWS should work to prevent poverty. For families involved in both CalWORKs and CWS, coordinated services can reduce the burdens of bureaucracy and can heighten opportunities for success. In the words of leaders from Merced County, Linkages helps “fight poverty and abuse.”

The Linkages Planning Guide is intended as a roadmap for county leaders making the decision whether or not to launch Linkages and as a resource for leaders in the 30 counties already implementing Linkages.

In many counties throughout California, Linkages has become “not a project, but a way of doing business,” an approach to serving families that puts their needs first. This Planning Guide provides specific guidance and tools to change the service system; its fundamental purpose is to help county leaders provide the best possible services to families.
“Overall, I don’t know if anything else could have worked for me. If these people wouldn’t have done it the way they did it . . . (I don’t know) if I would have been clean today . . . if I would have had my kids today . . . if I would have my little one bedroom Victorian apartment and my $350 car that runs like a dream.

I don’t know if I would have had all that.”
DECIDING TO LAUNCH LINKAGES

Linkages is distinguished from other coordinated services programs because it focuses on two primary programs – CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services (CWS); it employs a Work Plan Process that provides a road map for counties to plan and implement Linkages; and it provides modifiable tools developed and tested by Linkages counties. But most importantly, Linkages is an approach to social services built on an understanding of the impacts of poverty.

Deciding to launch Linkages involves four basic steps:

- Understand the Twin Philosophy of Linkages.
- Secure Leadership commitment to support Linkages from start to finish.
- Commit to the Linkages Building Blocks.
- Endorse the Linkages Work Plan Process.

Understand the Twin Philosophy of Linkages

The Linkages philosophy can be succinctly summarized:

Through improved coordination, Child Welfare Services can serve as an anti-poverty program; and CalWORKs can help prevent child abuse and neglect.

A study from the United States Department of Health and Human Services found that children from families with annual incomes below $15,000, as compared to children from families with annual incomes above $30,000, were more than 22 times likely to experience some form of maltreatment. Due to the frequent co-occurrence of poverty and abuse or neglect, it is not surprising that many welfare and child welfare agencies have clients in common.

In addition to struggling with poverty and the possible or actual removal of their children, families in both systems must navigate two bureaucracies that often impose conflicting requirements, goals, and timeframes. In many cases, a county’s welfare and child welfare services are

“Linkages is designed to assist families in crisis, particularly those dealing with the stresses and strains of poverty. It helps counties create partnerships across child welfare and welfare to reduce bureaucracy, coordinate services for families, and promote better outcomes. Linkages puts parenting first.”

Jill Duerr Berrick, Ph.D. Co-Director, Center for Child and Youth Policy, and Professor School of Social Welfare U.C. Berkeley
provided in different locations, which creates scheduling and transportation challenges. Clients typically go through separate and lengthy screening processes, yet answer many of the same questions for each program. Clients must also negotiate with two different service systems that do not communicate with each other.⁵

 Witnesses themselves face frustrations when serving clients involved in both systems. Parents miss appointments because of scheduling conflicts and are highly stressed trying to meet the demands and requirements of two case plans. Moreover, Child Welfare workers often are not given the authority or resources to provide child care, transportation, housing and other poverty mitigations that can help create a safe and stable environment for the family – resources that CalWORKs can provide. CalWORKs workers typically do not have the authority or resources to provide voluntary Family Maintenance services that can strengthen family interactions and help a client enter the job market – resources available through CWS.

Without coordination, the different approaches of CWS and CalWORKs can jeopardize the likelihood of a client succeeding in either program. The alternative is to reconfigure the service system to help workers collaborate to help families. That is the purpose of Linkages.

Before launching Linkages, it is important for county leaders to recognize that it is not just another methodology to coordinate services – it is built on an understanding of the interaction between poverty and maltreatment.

“Linkages helps people who work in counties break down the bureaucratic boundaries that limit services to families. We not only partner to help families resolve crises, we coordinate services to prevent poverty and abuse.”

Ray Gallagher
Linkages Co-Coordinator
Orange County
FIGURE 1
BENEFITS OF LINKAGES

For the families

- Coordinating services and providing quicker access to services can yield better outcomes for families because they don’t have competing plans, goals, and timelines.

- A single point of entry for families to access multiple service systems makes life easier for families who already have significant stress and few resources.

- Improved screening and assessment means that prevention services can be added, expanded, or offered earlier.

- A coordinated system can establish more accountability. There is less opportunity for miscommunication between families and staff.

- Families reduce the amount of time spent with program administration and increase the time spent in applying the skills learned.

- For families with domestic violence, mental health issues, alcohol and drug abuse, and other barriers to self-sufficiency, Linkages can facilitate access to a broad array of coordinated services.

For the county

- Coordination of services can mean better and more efficient use of existing resources – funding, staff, and time.

- Cost savings may result from reducing duplicate services, improving client outcomes, and reducing recidivism.

- Staff serving the same families will have a common purpose and a stronger sense of community because separations between programs will be reduced.

- Staff feels more knowledgeable, effective, and empowered; better morale among staff also helps with retention and recruitment.

- Coordination of programs may mean that the county can more effectively implement statutes and regulations.
Confirm Leadership Commitment

Before the county commits to coordinating CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services, county leaders need to assess if they can fully commit to the undertaking. They need to evaluate the work involved to plan and implement the program, the changes in staff practice, and the benefits for client families and county workers (see Figure 1 on the previous page). The informed commitment of the Director of the county’s Social Services Agency is essential to the success of Linkages.

"From being involved with the development of the mission, to really believing families benefit from linked services, to ensuring that the Department's organizational structure and policies are aligned – leadership is the key.”

Debby Jeter
Deputy Director
Department of Social Services
San Luis Obispo County

Note that a reflective process is recommended. For many counties, Linkages will be a valuable approach to better serve families. However, for some counties, it might be the wrong time to plan and commit to Linkages. Far too many pilot projects begin and are never expanded countywide.

While it is strategic to launch Linkages at a pilot site to assess if planned approaches and protocols fit the county’s needs and culture, leadership is necessary to ensure that piloted Linkages services become available countywide.

In short, for Linkages to be successful, sustained leadership is fundamental. The top leadership of the county’s social services system – the County Welfare Director or a strong Deputy Director – must be willing to spend time, brain power, and possibly even political capital to establish a vision, create a common mission, and retool administrative and service delivery systems.
**Commit to the Linkages Building Blocks**

The county constructs Linkages using three *building blocks*: Policy Foundation, Practice Protocols, and Administration. As county leaders assess the “fit” of Linkages to their county’s needs, it is important to understand the purpose of each building block and how they can be implemented through the Work Plan Process.

More detail is provided for each building block in the following sections. However, counties typically begin by establishing the *Policy Foundation*, which includes drafting a vision, mission and guiding principles. They choose a priority target population, as well as a model process for coordinating case plans between CWS and CalWORKs. Early discussion of expected outcomes is important, as this aligns the Linkages target population and practices with expected results.

Once the policy decisions have been made, counties focus on the second Linkages Building Block, *Practice Protocols*. Counties determine how to identify clients in the target population, set up processes for sharing information about prospective and actual clients, and establish written protocols for coordinated case planning.

Throughout the development of the policy foundation and the practice tools, counties also focus on the third Linkages Building Block, *Administration*, developing tools to help plan, implement, and evaluate Linkages. As soon as the county’s leadership decides to launch Linkages, a Planning Committee is established, and a Linkages Coordinator is appointed to facilitate planning and implementation. A Basic Orientation is organized to introduce staff to the philosophy and practice of Linkages. Finance staff identify methods to braid existing funding and maximize matching opportunities through Title IV-E. Ongoing training is developed to assist staff with coordinated case planning, supervising in a coordinated services environment, and other topics. Evaluation staff determine how to extract Linkages outcomes from evaluation efforts already underway.
Endorse the Linkages Work Plan Process

By using the Linkages Work Plan Process, the county can be certain to cover all of the essential building blocks to plan, implement and sustain their Linkages program, while at the same time benefiting from the strategies developed by the Pioneer Counties. The Linkages Work Plan is the central tool to develop Linkages.

The Linkages Work Plan is organized around the three Linkages Building Blocks: Policy Foundation, Practice Protocols, and Administration. Within each of these sections, the county will focus on several Topic Areas (see Figure 2 on next page) and develop goals, objectives, tasks and expected products.

The Linkages Work Plan Process offers specific planning tools. For example, counties modify the products, objectives and tasks in a Sample Plan to fit their own goals for Linkages. A Planning Worksheet provides instructions on how to develop the work plan. A blank Work Plan Template provides the form for the Planning Committee to set objectives, determine tasks, and identify products. An informal Linkages Assessment Tool is available to evaluate the county’s capacity and readiness to undertake Linkages. Each of these tools is described in more detail in the Administration section.

Endorsing and adopting the Linkages Work Plan Process allows the county’s leadership and staff to expeditiously plan and implement a Linkages program that fits the needs of the county’s families, staff and agencies.

“The work plan served as our road map in planning and implementation. It helped us focus on the steps to be taken in an organized manner. It made our planning easier because we knew what the next steps were and the target date to accomplish our tasks.

Including stakeholders in the development of the plan and using a team approach contributed in the smooth implementation of the plan.”

Nenita Dean
Linkages Coordinator
Stanislaus County
FIGURE 2
LINKAGES WORK PLAN:
BUILDING BLOCKS & TOPIC AREAS

POLICY FOUNDATION

- **Strategic Direction** – the vision, mission, and guiding principles that reflect the Linkages philosophy and shape a county’s Linkages effort.
- **Target Population** – the specific group(s) of clients to be served through coordination of CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services.
- **Coordinated Case Planning Model** – the most appropriate coordinated case planning model to use in a county’s Linkages effort, given the agency’s organizational structure.
- **Outcomes** – the desired client and program outcomes that will indicate success for the Linkages effort.

PRACTICE PROTOCOLS

- **Client Identification** – the procedures and tools for identifying and screening clients who are members of the target population(s).
- **Information Sharing** – the process and protocols for respectful sharing of information between CalWORKs and Child Welfare for the purpose of enhanced service coordination. May include modifications to a county’s confidentiality policy.
- **Coordinated Case Planning Protocols** – the procedures and tools necessary to carry out effective coordinated case planning between CalWORKs and Child Welfare.

ADMINISTRATION

- **Project Management** – the work planning, staffing, and reporting tools to keep Linkages on track.
- **Staff Training** – the education, training, and technical assistance used to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of CalWORKs and Child Welfare staff and management to successfully implement Linkages.
- **Funding** – the resources to implement and sustain Linkages.
- **Evaluation** – the method of tracking and analyzing client outcome data and other factors to determine Linkages results and make program improvements.
MOVING AHEAD: HOW TO BUILD LINKAGES

Once the county has made the decision to move forward, Linkages is constructed using the Linkages Building Blocks: Policy Foundation, Practice Protocols, and Administration. The Linkages Work Plan Process assists counties in setting goals and objectives to plan and implement Linkages.

The remainder of this Planning Guide provides a more detailed overview of each Linkages Building Block and profiles specific tools and materials that can be adapted to create a new Linkages program.7

In each subsequent section of the Planning Guide, Linkages planning tools are highlighted in dotted boxes. To access a copy of each tool, go to the on-line version of the Guide, available at www.cfpic.org. Documents can be accessed through electronic links. A complete list of Linkages tools is compiled in the Appendix.
BUILDING BLOCK #1: POLICY FOUNDATION

Establishing the policy foundation for Linkages guides changes in service delivery and administrative practices. The Linkages Policy Foundation has four steps:

- Establish a strategic direction.
- Choose a target population.
- Select a coordinated case planning model.
- Identify expected client outcomes.

While discussions among leadership and the Planning Committee need to be thorough to develop some level of consensus about the direction, values, goals and structures needed to support Linkages, it also important that planning be time limited. Most Pioneer Counties launched their pilot projects within six months – and avoided analysis paralysis.

As discussed earlier, pilot projects are a practical first step – they allow policy decisions to be tested and fine-tuned through actual practice. Modifications of initial plans are to be expected and encouraged before the county expands the pilot project throughout the county.

"During the Linkages planning stage we got together to answer the questions: Who do you want to serve? Why do you want to serve? How do you want to serve? This process brought clarity and focus to our Linkages efforts."

Tomy Joseph
Linkages Coordinator
San Francisco County
Establish a Strategic Direction

Linkages typically represents a shift in agency philosophy, and it is important for the county’s leadership and the Linkages Planning Committee to discuss and agree upon their rationale for coordinating CalWORKs and CWS, including expectations for clients, families, management, staff, the agency, and community partners.

The Partnership Project’s work groups recommended that four values anchor and guide Linkages: Service delivery should be family focused, needs driven, community connected, and strengths based.

To ensure that there is consensus about the strategic direction and to enable future training about the purpose of Linkages, final decisions about strategic direction need to be summarized into three written documents:

- vision statement,
- mission statement, and
- guiding principles.

Some Pioneer Counties also developed compelling slogans or mottos to summarize their Linkages vision and help clients, county staff, and community partners understand the purpose of their work. Figure 3 on the next page presents the vision, mission, and guiding principles of Yolo County. Additional samples of these documents can be found on-line. Discussion questions are also available to guide a Planning Committee’s development of their vision, mission, and guiding principles.

“*Our mission statement is far more than a slogan. It defines us. It’s our battle cry. We developed it together; we believe in it; we live it: ‘We fight poverty and abuse.’*”

Ana Pagan, Director
Merced County Human Services Agency
Vision
Children are entitled to live in a safe and healthy environment with families that are stable and self-sufficient.

Mission
To coordinate services for cross-over families through more realistic “family” case plans that can allow families to achieve success.

Guiding Principles
Using a team approach for case management services based on common ground and that supports:

- A holistic perspective for families;
- A simplified process that reduces duplication of efforts;
- Collaboration with internal and external partners;
- Honors client choice; and
- Provides timely services in a respectful manner.
Choose a Target Population

A strength of the Linkages Work Plan Process is that the Planning Committee is asked to identify a specific priority population to receive Linkages services. By focusing attention on the needs of one type of family, decision making becomes real about that target population’s needs, their typical points of intersection with county agencies, and the types of staffing and resources available to support them. Once policy and practice decisions are made for one target population, they can be modified to serve another.

Pioneer Counties

All Pioneer Counties began service delivery with what came to be known as cross-over families: those receiving both CalWORKs and CWS Family Maintenance services (both court-ordered and voluntary).

Other target populations served by Pioneer Counties include:

- Families with open cases in CalWORKs and receiving Family Reunification services.
- AB 429 families who have lost CalWORKs payments but continue to receive CalWORKs services and who have an open case in child welfare where the child has been removed.
- Families with open cases in CalWORKs with multiple risk factors who are suitable for preventive services to strengthen family stability and prevent entrance into CWS.
- Families in child welfare at risk of entering CalWORKs.
- Diversion families – families in child welfare at risk of entering CalWORKs, but provided one-time welfare services (such as rent, child care) to avoid ongoing enrollment in CalWORKs.

While Figure 4 on the following page maps out many possible target populations for Linkages, the Planning Committee needs to pragmatically determine which target population will be the first to receive Linkages services. Keeping the focus on one target population allows decisions to be made and momentum to develop.

“We began with one staff person serving one target population, families receiving both CalWORKs and Family Maintenance services. This decision provided the opportunity to define and revise protocols, reduce barriers, and support developing professional relationships. These beginnings provided a positive foundation when we expanded to all staff. Most importantly, we could see almost immediately how it helped the families.”

Debbie Powell
Linkages Coordinator
Yolo County
FIGURE 4
LINKAGES TARGET POPULATIONS

**In CWS but not in CalWORKs**
- Families in CWS Family Preservation or Family Maintenance who are not in CalWORKs, but may be eligible for CalWORKs, CalWORKs Diversion, Food Stamps, or Medi-Cal Services
- Teenagers coming out of Foster Care who have children and are eligible for CalWORKs
- Non-custodial parents of children in CWS who are linked to CalWORKs families through the custodial parent
- Families with a current CWS Emergency Response investigation that will not be opened as a case

**In CWS and in CalWORKs**
- Families in CalWORKs and receiving CWS voluntary or court-ordered Family Maintenance or Preservation Services
- Families in CWS Family Reunification services eligible for CalWORKs 180-day employment services
- Families in CalWORKs with children in Permanent Placement Services

**In CalWORKs**
- Non-needy relatives
- Families who are in CalWORKs sanction
- Families who are reaching 60-month time limits
- Families with no CWS history, but with risk factors such as domestic violence, substance abuse, poor school attendance, and lack of compliance with CalWORKs requirements
- Families transitioning out of CWS with an ongoing CalWORKs case
- Families in CalWORKs with prior Child Welfare history, e.g., referrals
- Teens in CalWORKs, including teen parents
- Kin-Gap families

**Not in CWS**
- Families not receiving CalWORKs, but meeting the “needy family” criteria
- Families not receiving CalWORKs, but receiving prevention services under the auspices of goals 3 and 4 of TANF
- Families referred for eligibility determination for Medi-Cal, Food Stamps, or Diversion Services
- Families referred by mandated domestic violence, substance abuse, or mental health reporters

**Not in CalWORKs but not in CWS**
- Families not receiving CalWORKs, but meeting the “needy family” criteria
- Families not receiving CalWORKs, but receiving prevention services under the auspices of goals 3 and 4 of TANF
- Families referred for eligibility determination for Medi-Cal, Food Stamps, or Diversion Services
- Families referred by mandated domestic violence, substance abuse, or mental health reporters
Select a Coordinated Case Planning Model

To launch Linkages, the Planning Committee needs to determine how to coordinate case planning and case management. All of these activities can be arranged along a continuum from informal to formal, yielding three different models of coordinated case planning (CCP):

- Informal Communication
- Linked Case Plans
- Unified Case Plan

Below are brief descriptions of each CCP model.

Informal Communication
In this most informal model, CalWORKs and CWS workers understand that both programs are working with the same family. However, there are no formal protocols and implementation depends largely on the interest and motivation of individual workers. No written materials are in place to guarantee that the program will remain after initial implementation.

- Workers in each system are encouraged, but not required, to cross-check to determine if the family has an open case in the other program.
- There are two independently prepared case plans.
- Supervisors encourage staff to discuss their cases with the other program worker as needed.

Linked Case Plans
CalWORKs and CWS workers have a high level of coordination at the earliest opportunity and throughout the case. The service providers work together with the family to follow through on the family’s prioritized service needs and activities.

- Formal protocols require workers to share information between programs when client and family needs are assessed.
- Two case plans are developed.
- Workers coordinate case plan goals, services, and timelines to meet the prioritized needs of the family.
- Case plans include, as appropriate, any treatment plans with substance abuse, mental health, or other service providers.

"If the coordinated case planning system isn’t formalized, it won’t happen. Individual workers may see the benefit and coordinate cases on a case-by-case basis, but if we want to see true linkage between CWS and CalWORKs across the board, we must make the expectation clear and create a formalized system.”

Randi Gottlieb
Phase One Linkages Coordinator
Tehama County
- A primary case manager may be assigned.
- Workers from both CalWORKs and CWS meet with the family (e.g., joint home visits) at critical junctures in the assessment, planning, and case implementation phases.
- The workers are required to have regular contact with each other to track the progress of the two case plans.
- Adjustments are made to the case plans as needed.

**Unified Case Plan**

Regardless of where and for what reasons the family entered the system, a protocol requires that a single comprehensive case plan address the family’s needs.

- Critical to this model is an accurate, joint/interdisciplinary assessment which identifies and describes the needs of the family.
- There is agreement between the family, the workers, and the service providers on the desired goals and outcomes of the plan, the services to be provided, and what agency will provide the services.
- The workers operate as a team on all aspects of the case from assessment to case resolution.
- In some cases, there is a CWS court case component which, due to privacy, is not shared.
- The unified plan identifies one primary or lead case manager.

Figure 5 below provides a comparison of key features of the different coordinated case planning models.

**FIGURE 5**

**FEATURES OF DIFFERENT MODELS OF COORDINATED CASE PLANNING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODEL OF COORDINATED CASE PLANNING</th>
<th>CLIENT IDENTIFICATION</th>
<th>WORKER COMMUNICATION</th>
<th>COORDINATION OF CASE PLANS</th>
<th>PRIMARY OR LEAD CASE MANAGER</th>
<th>EVALUATION OF CLIENT’S PROGRESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INFORMAL COMMUNICATION</strong></td>
<td>Encouraged</td>
<td>Encouraged on as needed basis</td>
<td>Two independently prepared plans; workers encouraged to share</td>
<td>Two different case managers</td>
<td>Workers encouraged to discuss progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LINKED CASE PLANS</strong></td>
<td>Formal protocol</td>
<td>Required – workers share assessment information and other case information</td>
<td>Two case plans are developed in coordination with each other</td>
<td>A primary case manager may be assigned</td>
<td>Workers required to jointly evaluate progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNIFIED CASE PLAN</strong></td>
<td>Formal protocol</td>
<td>Required – from assessment through case resolution</td>
<td>One unified case plan</td>
<td>There is one primary case manager</td>
<td>Workers operate as a team to evaluate progress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identify Outcomes for Evaluation

Throughout the country, there is an increased focus on assessing outcomes for clients to determine if social service programs are meeting client needs.

The Partnership Project has developed an Evaluation Guide to help counties evaluate outcomes. Steps include developing a theory of change (expectations of how coordinated services will impact client outcomes), selecting preferred outcomes, and choosing indicators.

In order to sustain the Linkages evaluation effort, the approach designed by the Partnership Project does not require additional data collection, but instead depends on information already collected to meet federal (ASFA\textsuperscript{9}) and state (AB 636\textsuperscript{10}) requirements for outcomes evaluation. At the conclusion of Phase One of the Partnership Project, a few Pioneer Counties were beginning to collect and assess outcomes for Linkages clients.\textsuperscript{11}

Theory of Change

Most Pioneer Counties adopted a similar theory of change, which in turn creates an expectation of certain outcomes and requires the measurement of pre-determined indicators. Shelby McCulley, in Alameda County’s Linkages Program Evaluation Plan,\textsuperscript{12} outlines a theory of change that fits most Linkages projects. Summarized, this theory of change is:

Linkages services (multi-disciplinary team, joint family meetings, coordinated case plan development, ongoing case management) result in case plans that are integrated and adapted to the individual needs of the family. Coordination can also maximize the resources available from CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services and can lead to clients having improved access to services. Clients are therefore more likely to meet their plan requirements and therefore less likely to experience sanctions or experience breaks in aid. With improved access to and coordination of services, clients experience less stress, are at lower risk for child abuse and neglect, and are more likely to achieve family stability and economic self-sufficiency.
Outcomes and Indicators

Most Pioneer Counties selected cross-over families as their priority target population (families in Family Maintenance and CalWORKs). The outcome they are trying to improve is: “Children are first and foremost protected from child abuse and neglect.” The primary indicator being evaluated for that outcome is “recurrence of maltreatment.” (Additional outcomes and indicators can be selected using the Coordinated Services Outcomes Matrix, available in the Linkages Evaluation Guide.)

It is important for leadership to ensure that data entry be consistent within the county. For the outcome and indicator identified above, the Partnership Project worked with Linkages counties to develop a protocol for tracking Linkages clients in the Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS) system. Originally pioneered in Merced County, this protocol can be found in Appendix G of the Linkages Evaluation Guide.

More information about the administrative process of evaluating outcomes can be found in the section on Administration. Evaluation efforts continue to be refined and expanded during Phase Two of the Partnership Project.

“It's not really about the data — it's about helping the families. When you know where and why they entered the system, who worked with them, and what their outcomes were, you can do more to make sure your programs are meeting the needs of the people you serve.”

David Schilling  
Linkages Coordinator  
Merced County
**BUILDING BLOCK #2: PRACTICE PROTOCOLS**

Policy decisions made by the Planning Committee need to be translated into practice protocols. Linkages counties found that the process of specifying *written* protocols accomplished many objectives.

Ideas that were previously conceptual (coordinated case planning, for example) were translated into specific guidelines for practice. Written protocols also helped make practice more consistent and provided documentation for training. Moreover, having written protocols helped county workers to recommend improvements to the process.

Some counties drafted written protocols before launching Linkages. Others created protocols as they implemented their pilot programs. With either method, the creation of written protocols helped counties avoid an informal, haphazard approach to service delivery and helped to ensure the *systematizing* and *institutionalization* of Linkages.

Counties need to develop the following written materials:

- Client Identification Protocols
- Confidentiality Policy and Information-Sharing Protocols
- Coordinated Case Planning Protocols

“The way we implemented Linkages in our county was first to convey to CWS Workers and CalWORKs Employment Training Workers that we wanted them to start talking and working together on all joint cases. At the same time, we developed our vision, mission, guiding principles, and written protocols. We went from theory to practice and back to theory, tried things other counties were doing that proved successful for them, and over time developed a practice that worked for us. We started with two specialized case workers, one Employment and one Child Welfare, and then moved to other workers. Now it is the way we do business for all workers countywide.”

Randi Gottlieb
Phase One Linkages Coordinator
Tehama County
**Client Identification Protocols**

Once the county’s target population is identified, it then becomes necessary to identify real families that fit that priority group. Most Linkages counties launched their programs serving cross-over families, those in Family Maintenance and CalWORKs.

In most counties, cross-over clients are identified in both programs. Emergency Response workers query about current involvement in CalWORKs and/or screen for CalWORKs eligibility. Clients applying for CalWORKs are asked about past and current involvement in child welfare and/or the client’s child welfare status is checked by a clerk. Once a family has been identified as a cross-over family, they are referred to a Linkages case worker.

Linkages Planning Tools include client identification protocols, tracking logs, and a PowerPoint overview of the approach used in San Francisco County.
Confidentiality/Information-Sharing

In most Pioneer Counties, the welfare and child welfare programs are housed in the same agency, and confidentiality concerns were addressed by asking clients to sign one information release form that allowed information to be shared among caseworkers. To support this process, Linkages counties updated their confidentiality policies and developed protocols related to Linkages. They also required staff training on confidentiality, and in some cases, made available desk references with confidentiality forms and guidelines.

Linkages Planning Tools include confidentiality policies, release forms, and a desk guide.

“Addressing confidentiality was particularly challenging for us because we have so many different agencies involved in our Linkages program, and each agency has different rules it must follow. On the other hand, having so many agencies involved has made our Linkages program that much stronger. Our confidentiality protocol works for us by giving us the flexibility to share information to best serve clients while, at the same time, protecting their privacy.”

Roy Redlich
Phase One Linkages Coordinator
Sonoma County
**Coordinated Case Planning Protocols**

Once a model for the county’s approach to coordinated case planning (CCP) has been selected, protocols need to be developed that provide direction for staff at every step of case planning, coordination and resolution.

Decisions need to be made regarding:

- Membership of the CCP team
- Methods of assessment
- Expectations for and methods of team communication
- Development of the coordinated service plan
- Level of family involvement
- Case management
- Case resolution

Of particular importance, counties need to determine which staff member is responsible (and accountable) for initiating dialogue with other staff about specific Linkages families, who the primary case manager will be, the method for ensuring that service plans and delivery are coordinated, and how cases are to be resolved.

Some counties (see the Orange County example in the Tool Box) have established policies that a family’s CWS service plan automatically meets the CalWORKs plan requirements. In this way, the family is provided an opportunity to stay intact and focus on services to address child safety or neglect. After CWS issues are resolved, the family may continue in CalWORKs.

Stanislaus County’s coordinated case planning process is diagrammed in Figure 6 on the next page. On the subsequent page, Figure 7 compares case descriptions of uncoordinated and coordinated plans for the same family.
**FIGURE 6**

**STANISLAUS COUNTY: COORDINATED CASE PLANNING MODEL**

CalWORKs-Child Welfare Collaboration Effort
on Cross-Over Active/Open Cases

---

**Active/Open CalWORKs and CWS Case**
Identified at family’s point of entry either in CalWORKs or CWS.

**Case Assigned**
Integrated Services Manager or Supervisor receives caseload list and reviews if the cases are cross-over cases. Case is assigned to Integrated Services Family Services Specialist III (FSS III) if case is cross-over case.

**Employment Services Orientation**
FSS III conducts CalWORKs Employment Services/Orientation if family is at First Step residential treatment program. Otherwise, referrals are made to Dept. of Employment for Employment Services/Orientation.

**First Staff Meeting to Coordinate Case**
Assigned FSS III and CWS Social Worker meet to discuss case, case status, court plan, and potential needs, and schedule a service coordination meeting that includes the family and all of the service providers.

**Staff and Family Meet on Service Plan**
FSS III and CWS Social Worker convene service coordination meeting (scheduled every Wednesday) and, with input and buy-in from the family, identify strengths, barriers, needs and concerns; identify activities and hours to be integrated into plan; identify and secure services to support plan; secure family’s agreement to the plan; and review expectations and verification requirements and next steps with the family. Note: FSS III, CWS social worker and other partners meet 30 minutes prior to the family joining the meeting.

**Need for Employment Services Assessed/Appropriate Referrals Made**
FSS III from Dept. of Employment and Training conducts group or individual testing, discusses results, develops plan to address barriers with client, secures client’s agreement, and leverages support services.

**Staff Coordinate Case Plan Monitoring and Modifications**
CWS Social Worker and CalWORKs FSS III monitor cross-over/joint case plan for progress and compliance to agreements. Necessary modifications to plan are facilitated jointly with FSS III, CWS SW and other partners – always securing involvement of the family. Communication is on-going. Crisis case staffing is held if needed. Joint home visits also occur.

**Case Resolution and After-Care**
CWS case closes. CalWORKs case remains open with existing FSS III. A CalWORKs Social Worker is assigned if assessment warrants after-care services (up to one year) in order to prevent the family from re-entering CWS.
FIGURE 7
COMPARING UNCOORDINATED AND COORDINATED PLANS: IMPACTS ON FAMILY LIVES

Below are two descriptions of case plans for the same family, a composite of actual circumstances for families in CalWORKs and CWS. These descriptions illustrate how uncoordinated and coordinated case plans can impact family life in dramatically different ways. The descriptions also showcase strategies to coordinate plans, approaches currently in use in Orange County.

An Uncoordinated CalWORKs and CWS Plan

*CalWORKs Plan*
Barbara and Ted* are on CalWORKs. The CalWORKs worker did not inquire whether they are also receiving CWS services, and the clients did not mention it.

Ted is participating 35 hours per week in approved CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work activity. His CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work plan includes 32 hours of vocational training at the community college in a four-month intensive training program. Ted will have a refrigeration repair certification at the end of the class. Ted must also receive three hours a week of Behavioral Health Services. No child care is provided because Barbara is staying home with the children.

*CWS Plan*
The CWS worker did not inquire whether the family is on a CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work plan, and the clients did not mention it. Child Welfare Services activities require parenting education classes and counseling three times a week for three months for both parents. Barbara has mandated drug testing weekly and is required to participate in substance abuse treatment. In addition to a weekly therapist session, she has to attend a one-hour group session at least four times a week. Ted must attend Al-Anon once weekly.

A Coordinated CalWORKs /CWS Plan
Agency identifies clients who are in both programs and informs both the CalWORKs and CWS workers that Barbara and Ted are in CalWORKs and CWS. The CalWORKs worker calls the CWS worker to discuss the case and coordinate their case plans. The coordinated case plan includes the following elements:

For CalWORKs, Ted is participating 35 hours per week in an approved Welfare-to-Work activity. Ted's CalWORKs plan includes CWS activities: parenting classes and Al-Anon totaling ten hours per week and three hours coordinated with Behavioral Health Services.

The CWS worker uses participation in CalWORKs Behavioral Health Services to meet Barbara and Ted's counseling and parent education requirements. The CWS worker also uses the CalWORKs requirement of 20 hours of vocational training, which will be completed in six months, to demonstrate Ted's cooperation and efforts towards stability.

Child care for the children will be paid through CalWORKs while Barbara attends drug counseling and testing as required by the CWS case plan. The CWS and CalWORKs workers jointly address the appropriateness of the child care provider and Trustline requirements. Transportation is paid through CalWORKs for parents to get to various CWS and CalWORKs activities. Throughout, the CalWORKs and CWS workers maintain contact to monitor the family’s progress and revise their case plan as needed.

* Not their real names.
BUILDING BLOCK #3: ADMINISTRATION BUILDING BLOCK

It is important to think through how to support Linkages and keep it on track, including the administrative supports of project management, staff training, funding, and evaluation.

Project Management

Linkages is managed or facilitated on a day-to-day basis by a Linkages Coordinator who has ongoing input from a Planning or Implementation Committee. The Linkages Work Plan is developed to articulate the county’s vision of Linkages, and then to guide its implementation.

Linkages Coordinator

Appointing a Linkages Coordinator is an essential component of project management. Because the Linkages effort involves breaking down barriers between programs, cultures and social groups, it is important to give the Linkages Coordinator sufficient authority and time to accomplish their work. In Phase One, the most successful Coordinators were in management or line positions. Most Linkages Coordinators managed their responsibilities as one component of their overall responsibilities; in some counties, Linkages Coordinators were full-time.

“The coordinator is like an air traffic controller. They facilitate the process, bring people to consensus, ask what if and why, ensure that the details are tended to, cut through red tape, play cheerleader, communicate – communicate – communicate, make refinements, and invent new ways of doing things.”

Ana Pagan, Director
Merced County Human Services Agency
Planning and Implementation Committee
As the work plan is developed and implemented, it is important to have the input and buy-in of a committed group of management and line staff. The group should be large enough to assure breadth of feedback, but not so large that meetings are not interactive or productive. The Social Services Director or a Deputy Director is the official chair of the committee, while the functional head of the group is the Linkages Coordinator. In addition to having representation from management and direct service staff from both child welfare and welfare, it is important to include knowledgeable and influential staff from human resources, staff training, finance/accounting, evaluation (including CWS/CMS), and, as needed, legal.

Work Plan
As discussed in an earlier section, project management is guided through the Linkages Work Plan Process. It is important for leadership to participate in the development of the work plan and use the work plan to assess efforts underway and the products developed. It is also important that county leadership empower the Linkages Coordinator to use the work plan as a management tool with other staff and divisions. In essence, the work plan represents the direction set by leadership, and the Linkages Coordinator borrows this authority to work with staff to produce deliverables and meet timelines.

Work plans are developed using several tools:

**Sample Plan** – provides a model work plan that includes goals, products, objectives, and tasks for each Topic Area in the three Linkages Building Blocks. Counties modify the model to fit their specific goals for Linkages.

**Planning Worksheet** – offers an overview of the three Linkages Building Blocks and nested Topic Areas and provides instructions on how to develop a work plan that meets the county’s goals.
**Work Plan Template** – a blank template to help the Planning Committee set objectives, determine tasks, and identify products.

**Linkages Assessment Tool** – assesses the agency’s capacity and readiness to undertake Linkages. This is an informal tool to help identify where to invest planning resources.13

The process of developing the work plan involves selecting a Topic Area, identifying an implementation objective that can be accomplished within 12 months, and determining a product that will result from specific tasks within the established time frame. While the planning process can take time, Pioneer Counties learned that their collaborative discussions resulted in concrete, do-able action plans that greatly facilitated their implementation process.

**Reports to Leadership and Partners**
Periodic reports to the Agency Director, Chief Administrative Office and Board of Supervisors are an important means to achieve buy-in for Linkages, keep up momentum, and build visibility. It is also important to check in and report progress to community groups and partners. For some internal reports, the work plan can be reconfigured to provide a progress report.

“Yolo County utilized the work plan as an agreement between management and supervisors from both Child Welfare Services and Employment and Training Services. In times of dwindling resources, position vacancies and conflicting mandates, the work plan reminded the team of our commitment to the coordination of services.”

Debbie Powell
Linkages Coordinator
Yolo County
**Staff Training**

Planning and implementing Linkages creates a culture change in the county. Some staff thrive on goal-oriented changes and adapt easily; others are resistant. In either case, staff training is needed to educate both management and line staff about the new vision, as well as the specific protocols that will guide practice.

Pioneer Counties in Phase One conducted training in a number of fundamental areas for which there are tools and materials.

**Basic Orientation**

It is valuable to provide staff with basic information about the “other” system that they will be working with. Welfare workers are not always familiar with the basic responsibilities and activities of child welfare, nor are child welfare workers typically aware of the responsibilities and resources available under CalWORKs. In Phase One, each Pioneer County conducted a “Basic Orientation” for workers in both programs. Two educational primers are available that outline each program. Also, a Basic Orientation curriculum is available through the Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice (RCFFP) at University of California, Davis. Many counties included social time during their orientations, recognizing that personal relationships are one motivation for collaboration.
Other Training Tools and Approaches

In addition to offering a Basic Orientation, a number of other training tools and approaches are available.

- CCRWF worked in partnership with WalSmith Productions to produce a staff training video on Linkages.
- Del Norte County has developed an innovative approach that uses their Linkages Work Plan as a training tool to educate staff about Linkages. For background, see their PowerPoint presentation.
- In California, county child welfare programs are required by the state to develop an annual training program. Pioneer Counties used this planning process to integrate Linkages into their overall training plan.
- In order to sustain Linkages, many counties now include Linkages training as part of their new hire orientation.
- RCFFP offers curricula and training on coordinated case planning and supervising in a coordinated services environment. They also offer facilitated training to develop vision and mission statements.
- Some Linkages teams receive training on team work and team decision-making.
- Related to outcomes evaluation, some counties are adding a Linkages component to their CWS/CMS training.

“**It was important to provide staff and partners the training and tools they needed to implement our new approach – Linkages. The Basic Orientation helped everyone get on the same page, but continual training and reinforcement were important.**”

---

Nenita Dean
Linkages Coordinator
Stanislaus County

As counties move from pilot program to county-wide service systems, building in a feedback loop between Linkages staff and the planning committee is a valuable way to identify needed training or to gather ideas to modify existing training. The Child and Family Policy Institute of California, in partnership with the state’s Child Welfare Training Academies and the Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice, can help counties develop or modify training to meet their needs.
Financing

Providing coordinated services allows counties to blend funding for client families with the possibility of expanding or extending services.

Pioneer Counties found it a worthwhile investment to:

- Establish an accounting structure that is invisible to the client, understood by caseworkers, and managed by accounting staff.
- Understand sources of funding for families involved in more than one system.

Accounting Structure

Stanislaus County has designed a model accounting structure that is modifiable to the needs of different counties. Developing and using the accounting structure involves five steps:

1. Define the service need or program design.
2. Review the funding sources available to the county.
3. Select all potential/most likely funding sources.
4. Choose the specific funding streams/braids to fit the program.
5. Document the financial requirements.

A PowerPoint tutorial for this accounting structure is available on-line. The tutorial also includes a spreadsheet that demonstrates an actual Linkages case.
Funding Sources
While changes in federal law and regulation can result in changes in the funding available for coordinated services and Linkages, at this point in time there are four approaches available to fund Linkages services: AB 2496, Matching Funds, Braided Funding, and Title IV-E Training Funds.

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) offers free consultations to counties, through their Fiscal Unit (see tool box on preceding page). CDSS is also sponsoring a Fiscal Academy, operated through the Center for Human Services at the University of California, Davis, Extension. The Fiscal Academy makes available periodic statewide and regional trainings on fiscal issues. For more information, contact www.humanservices.edu/fiscalacademy or (530) 757-8643.

**AB 2496: The CWS Program Improvement Fund**
Assembly Bill 2496 created a Child Welfare Services Program Improvement Fund in the State Treasury, consisting of private grants, gifts, and bequests made to the State. Upon appropriation by the Legislature, monies from this fund can be expended for the purpose of enhancing the state’s ability to provide supports that promote positive outcomes for children and families. Counties do not have access to the funds in AB 2496. To the extent possible, AB 2496 requires the State to use the monies in the fund as a match to obtain federal participation in the cost of eligible activities, and to augment federal, state, and county funds made available for child welfare services programs.

Counties that wish to use private donated funds as a match for Title IV-E training must have a procedure which appropriates the donated funds through the county budget, similar to procedures for the State as set forth in AB 2496. In AB 2496, the State Legislature appropriates the donations based on the submission of eligible activity requests such as support for social worker training. These funds are considered the State match to draw down the Title IV-E funds.

**Matching Funds**
Counties can use third party contributions (that are not in-kind) to match their Title IV-B and IV-E funding. These funds must be used to expand a program and not supplant current matching funds, and they must be used for allowable Title IV-E Administrative Costs. For more information, see the CDSS PowerPoint on Flexible Financing (10-28-04) and the CDSS informational letters listed in the tool box on the preceding page.
Braided Funding

Depending on the target population and the eligibility requirements for various funding sources, some funding can be used as a match for other funding sources.

IV-E Training Funds

Training costs associated with child welfare programs can be supported through federal Title IV-E training funds which provide up to 75% of financing (depending on a county’s discount rate).

45 Code of Federal Regulations 1356.60(b)(1) finds that 75 percent Federal Financial Participation is available only for the costs of training personnel employed by the County Welfare Department (CWD) or preparing for employment with the CWS, and for providing short-term training (including travel and per diem) to current or prospective foster or adoptive parents and the members of state-licensed or approved child care institutions providing care to foster or adopted children receiving Title IV-E assistance.

For more information, see CFL No. 03/04-34. It is also important to regularly check the CDSS website (link available in tool box on page 31) for updates to “Letters and Notices.”

“Once our Linkages program was up and running, including the active participation of our fiscal section, we found we could be a lot more creative about identifying support for our families. Resources expanded – and so did services.”

Nenita Dean
Linkages Coordinator
Stanislaus County
**Evaluation**

Once the county’s Planning Committee has determined which client outcomes and indicators are to be used, the county needs to set up an apparatus for collecting and analyzing the outcomes of Linkages services.

To reduce workload and increase the likelihood of an ongoing evaluation, Phase One Linkages counties are coordinating their Linkages evaluation efforts with their CWS outcomes assessments (AB 636), thus not doubling work efforts by creating simultaneous evaluation efforts. While outcomes evaluation is being conducted in some Linkages counties, it is not yet established in all counties, though work is underway to create a consistent statewide approach to Linkages evaluation.

Key steps include data collection, analysis, and reporting, which are outlined in the Linkages Evaluation Guide (see Figure 8 on the next page for a synopsis). As the Planning Committee makes decisions about data collection and analysis, it is essential to have a data/evaluation expert as part of the team.

Finally, in order to support state leadership having the capacity to evaluate outcomes across counties – and thus determine statewide results, it is also critical that counties use a common method for labeling and tracking data (see the Linkages Protocol for use in the Business Objects in the CWS/CMS database).
DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND REPORTING
There are several ways to approach the county’s evaluation. The evaluation team needs to work with the research and data experts to select a methodology that is do-able and will yield the desired results.

Consider:

A comparison of clients receiving and clients not receiving Linkages services
If there is a pilot city or location for Linkages services, consider tracking and comparing the outcomes for this Linkages population to a similar population county-wide or in another similar city or location that is not receiving Linkages services.

A comparison of before and after Linkages
If Linkages services have been implemented county-wide, you may want to track changes in the outcomes for that population over time, beginning with baseline data from before Linkages was implemented.

Collect and analyze outcomes data
This means that your data systems must have some mechanism for indicating that a client/family is receiving coordinated services and be able to extract that data from the overall data set for your selected target population.

There is a protocol for tracking Linkages clients in the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS). This protocol is outlined in a memo in Appendix G. There is not yet developed an equivalent protocol for the TANF data systems.

Develop a reporting timeframe
With your evaluation team, select a data reporting timeframe (e.g., quarterly, mid-year, and annual reports).

Meet with your evaluation team to review the data
Assess any changes and develop theories about the meaning of the changes in the outcomes. Be open to finding unintended positive or negative impacts of coordinated services that may not be in the county’s “theory of change.” Consider any implications of shortcomings of the data quality.

Confirm your theories through research with clients and/or staff. This could include conducting interviews, focus groups or surveys.

Make policy or practice changes according to your findings.

Keep collecting data, analyzing it, and revising your practices to make your services even better.
CONCLUSION

Linkages targets high-risk families, coordinates their services, and helps staff make the best use of limited resources. Through the Linkages Planning Guide, counties have the opportunity, using the Work Plan Process, to jumpstart their planning and implementation of Linkages, utilizing tools and materials developed in Phase One of the Partnership Project.

Before undertaking Linkages, it is critical that the county’s leadership determine they are committed – not to a pilot project – but to a coordinated services approach that helps families. Fundamental to this is an understanding that the county’s Child Welfare Services can work as an anti-poverty program, and the county’s welfare program can help prevent child abuse and neglect.

As counties have implemented Linkages, they have also created new approaches and identified connections to existing programs. Some counties are using Linkages as a prevention strategy to implement Differential Response in the redesign of the child welfare system. Working with The Children’s Research Center, Orange County has reconfigured the Structured Decision-Making (SDM) Risk Assessment Tool which now can be used to assess CalWORKs clients at-risk of entrance into CWS. Other counties are partnering with Family to Family to ensure that a CalWORKs representative participates in Team Decision Making meetings, while yet others are exploring how Linkages participation can help achieve more timely permanency for children.

In an era when government resources are limited and bureaucracies complex, Linkages offers counties a new way of doing business to better serve families. By breaking down barriers between systems, encouraging communication among staff dedicated to serving the public, establishing agreed-upon methods to guarantee that services are consistent and sustained, and by offering families caring, coordinated services – counties can move forward to “fight poverty and abuse.”
APPENDIX:
HISTORY OF THE
CALWORKs/CHILD WELFARE PARTNERSHIP PROJECT

Inspired by the nationally recognized program in El Paso County, Colorado, the first phase of the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project was launched in November 2000. The effort was funded by the Stuart Foundation, directed through the California Center for Research on Women and Families, a program of the Public Health Institute, and launched in partnership with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).

In the first phase, a statewide county survey was conducted to increase knowledge of county coordination practices already underway, something that was not previously known. The first phase also developed recommendations on how counties could improve coordination of child welfare and welfare programs.

Recommendations were developed by work groups in six programmatic areas identified as priorities: Organizational Structures, Flexible Financing, Organizational Change and Training, Data Systems, Confidentiality, and Coordinated Case Planning. Recommended changes in state law and practice were also developed. Over fifty county and state leaders worked for six months in a facilitated process to develop the recommendations, which were summarized in a series of publications, distributed to all 58 counties, and presented at a statewide conference for county and state leaders in May 2002.

The final two years of Phase One focused on implementation. Modest, two-year grants were given to support 13 counties to implement coordinated welfare/child welfare services. Counties were also supported with informational convenings and technical assistance. Each county designated a Linkages Coordinator, organized a Planning and Implementation Committee, developed an annual Work Plan, and strategically went about planning and implementing their Linkages services.

Due to the success of Phase One, the Stuart Foundation committed to funding for another Phase of Linkages, which began in April 2005. In Phase Two, 17 additional California counties are receiving technical assistance to plan and implement Linkages. Phase Two is directed through the Child and Family Policy Institute of California, affiliated with the County Welfare Directors Association. The effort to develop an evaluation methodology, funded by the Zellerbach Family Foundation, also continues in Phase Two.

Pioneer Linkages Counties
(Phase One)

Alameda * Del Norte * Mendocino *
Merced * Orange * San Francisco * San Luis Obispo *
Santa Barbara * Solano * Sonoma * Stanislaus * Tehama * Yolo

Phase Two Counties

Calaveras * Contra Costa * Fresno *
Humboldt * Kern * Lassen * Los Angeles *
Madera * Marin * Napa * Sacramento *
Santa Cruz * Siskiyou * Sutter * Trinity * Ventura * Yuba
APPENDIX:
LINKAGES TOOL BOX

Linkages Planning Tools: Strategic Direction
Examples of Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles (VMGP)
  Mendocino County, CA
  San Luis Obispo County, CA
  Tehama County, CA
  Yolo County, CA
  El Paso County, Colorado

Questions to Guide Planning Committee Discussion of VMGP

The Four Linkages Values

PowerPoint Presentations on Strategic Direction
  Merced County
  San Luis Obispo County

Linkages Planning Tools: Coordinated Case Planning Model
Historical Note on Organizational Structures

Partnership Project Recommendations from the CCP Work Group

Linkages Planning Tools: Outcomes Evaluation – Planning
Linkages Evaluation Guide
  See section on Planning

Linkages Planning Tools: Client Identification
Client Identification Protocols
  Del Norte County
  Mendocino County
  Orange County
  Merced County
    Client ID Protocol
    Client ID – Sanctioned Cases
    Screening and Weekly Reports
  Stanislaus County
    Client ID Policy and Protocols
    Client ID Referral System
    Coordinated Case Screening Tool
    Tracking Log

PowerPoint Overview
  San Francisco

Partnership Project Recommendations from the Data Systems Work Group
**Linkages Planning Tools: Confidentiality**

Mendocino County
- Confidentiality Policies and Procedures
- Confidentiality Q & A
- MDT Confidentiality Guidelines

San Luis Obispo County
- Desk Guide on Communication between Adult, Child Welfare and Participant Services Staff

Sonoma County
- Confidentiality MOU
- Client Release Form - MDT
- Sign-in Form

Stanislaus County
- Confidentiality MOU
- Multi-Agency Consent Form

Confidentiality Manual from the Cathy Wright Technical Assistance Center

See also the Partnership Project Recommendations from the Confidentiality Work Group
Appendix includes the Model Consent Form developed by the Youth Law Center

**Linkages Planning Tools: Coordinated Case Planning Protocols**

CCP Protocols
- Mendocino County
- Stanislaus County
- Yolo County

SLO County
- Protocols
- Screening Form
- Team Contact Form
- Case Plan Form

Orange County
- CWS Plan Meets Requirements for CalWORKs Plan

PowerPoint Presentations:
- Orange County
- Yolo County

Partnership Project Recommendations from the Coordinated Case Planning Work Group

**Linkages Planning Tools: Project Management**

Linkages Work Plan Process
- Sample Plan
- Planning Worksheet
- Work Plan Template
- Linkages Assessment Tool

Configuring the Work Plan as a Reporting Tool – the San Francisco Example
**Linkages Planning Tools: Training**

CCRWF Primers:
- Understanding the Child Welfare System in California: A Primer for Service Providers and Policymakers
- Understanding CalWORKs: A Primer for Service Providers and Policymakers

Curricula from RCFFP
- Basic Orientation
- Coordinated Case Planning
- Supervising in a Coordinated Services Environment

Training Plans
- Del Norte: Work Plan as Training Tool
- SLO County – Integrating Linkages into Training
- Mendocino County
  - Basic Orientation Overview
  - Linkages Training Outline
  - Basic Orientation Evaluation Form

Partnership Project Recommendations
  from the Organizational Change and Training Work Group

Linkages: A Staff Training Video on the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project

**Linkages Planning Tools: Flexible Financing**

Stanislaus County Accounting Structure PowerPoint Tutorial

AB 2496 – Authorizing Legislation for the Child Welfare Services Program Improvement Fund

CDSS Informational Power Point on Flexible Financing (10-28-04)

CDSS Letters and Notices
- County Fiscal Letters (CFL)
  - 03/04-22
  - 03/04-34
  - 94/95-38
  - 02/03-33
- All County Letter 04-32

Check for updates at “CDSS Letters and Notices” on the CDSS website at http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/default.htm

CDSS Fiscal Unit
- (916) 657-1668
- or e-mail fiscal.systems@dss.ca.gov

CDSS Fiscal Academy
UCD Extension/Center for Human Services
- www.humanservices.edu/fiscalacademy
- (530) 757-8643
**Linkages Planning Tools: Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting**
Linkages Evaluation Guide
  See section on Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting

**Linkages Planning Tools: New Directions**
Structured Decision-Making (SDM) Risk Assessment Tool

The Children’s Research Center
http://www.nccd-crc.org/

Partnership Project Analysis: Connecting Linkages with Differential Response
Appendix:

For More Information About the Partnership Project

For more information about the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project, contact the Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC) at (916) 551-1431, or go to www.cfpic.org

The Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC) is a private non-profit organization formed to advance the development of sound public policy and promote program excellence in county Human Services Agencies through research, education, training and technical assistance. CFPIC was founded by and operates under the auspices of California’s 58 County Welfare Directors.

Development of the Linkages Planning Guide

The Linkages Planning Guide was developed by Kate Karpilow, Ph.D., Executive Director of the California Center for Research on Women and Families (CCRWF), a program of the Public Health Institute. For more information on CCRWF, go to www.ccrwf.org. Ms. Karpilow directed the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project at CCRWF from November 2000 through March 2005.

Recommended Citation:
**End Notes**

1. CalWORKs is California’s welfare (TANF) program and is more formally known as California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids, or CalWORKs.


6. These building blocks were developed through the recommendations of Partnership Project work groups and the implementation efforts of Pioneer Counties. The Linkages Training Video highlights leadership as an additional building block.

7. When adapting tools from other jurisdictions, county leaders need to evaluate the requirements of their own social service systems. This process involves an assessment of organizational structure, staffing resources and culture, service population, and resources, among many considerations.

8. After the Partnership Project began its work in 2000, we learned that coordinated case planning was a concept that was widely known and almost universally supported, but the phrase had different meanings in different counties. Through our work group discussions, we identified common features of coordinated case planning (CCP) and different CCP models.

9. Congress passed the Adoption and Safe Families Act, or ASFA, which required the reporting and evaluation of outcomes measures to the federal government.

10. Assembly Bill 636 authorized the California Child and Family Services Review, which established requirements that outcome measures be evaluated in child welfare. Data is stored and analyzed using a system known as CWS/CMS, or Child Welfare Services Case Management System.

11. The value of this approach is that no additional data collection (or the expense for this effort) needs to be undertaken to evaluate Linkages.


13. It is most productive to complete the Linkages Assessment Tool after the Planning Guide and Sample Plan have been thoroughly reviewed and discussed.