

CALWORKS WELFARE-TO-WORK PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK



California Department of Social Services

California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work
Participant Handbook

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Welcome to CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work (WTW)

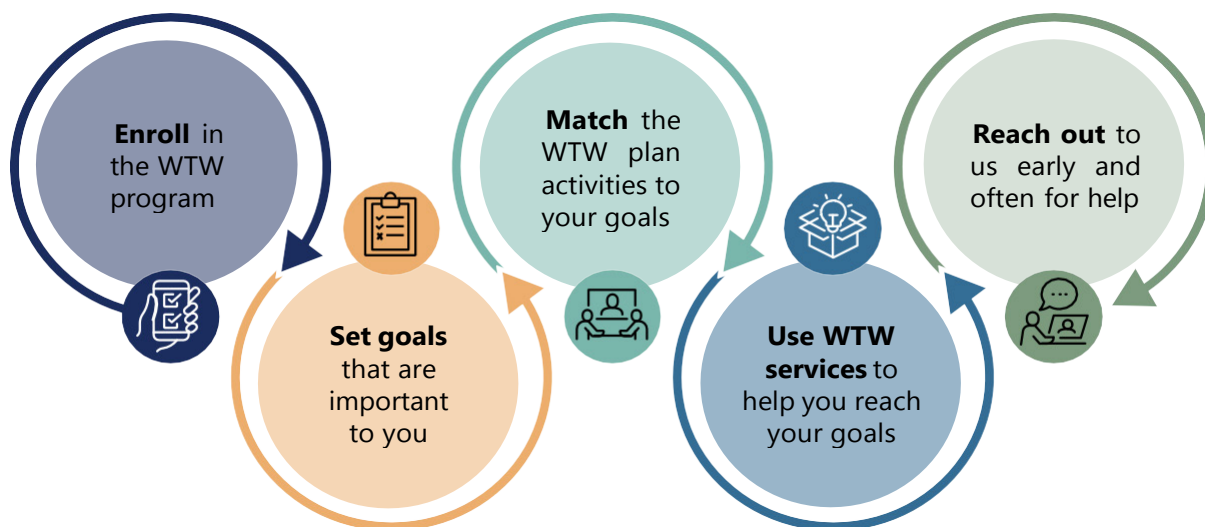
We are here to help you set goals and achieve them!

The CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work (WTW) program is here to support you on your career journey. We offer coaching, on-the-job training, and other helpful services to get you where you want to be.

CalWORKs WTW can help you build a better future for yourself and your family. This handbook explains the program's activities, supportive services, and what's expected of you. Your dedicated WTW case manager is here to answer your questions and guide you through the program.

We recommend reading this handbook before attending the CalWORKs WTW orientation. Come prepared with any questions you may have. Together with your WTW case manager, you'll create a personalized plan to reach your goals.

We know there's a lot of information to take in. Here's how to break it down!



WTW case manager's contact information

Name:

Phone:

Email/Online:

Address:

Enrolling in CalWORKs WTW

CalWORKs WTW starts with an orientation and a meeting with your WTW case manager to talk about your career goals. This is often called an appraisal meeting. From there, we'll talk about what you need to get prepared for your career. Once you've completed any career preparation activities, we'll complete an assessment. Then, together with your WTW case manager, you'll make a plan to work toward your goals. Your WTW case manager will be ready to help you act on that plan.



Step 1: Orientation

During orientation you'll learn more about CalWORKs WTW, including:

- Activities you can do;
- Supportive services that are available for you, like transportation, child care, help paying for diapers, money for work and education expenses, and more;
- Requirements, like the number of hours you must participate every week, verifications you must provide, and when you can have valid reasons for not participating (called good cause; see [page 19](#)) or be exempt (excused) from WTW requirements ([page 18](#)); and
- Policies, like what happens if you do not participate, how to extend time limits or deadlines, and how you can ask for a hearing or file a formal grievance ([page 20](#)).

Soon after orientation, you will have an appraisal meeting with your WTW case manager, where they'll get to know you.



Step 2: Appraisal

At the appraisal meeting, you will talk to your WTW case manager about your **goals, employment and education history, and housing status**. In addition, you'll learn about:

- Screening and support available for your learning needs;
- Supportive services available to you, your family, and your child(ren) for your physical and mental health; and

- Supportive services for past or present domestic abuse issues.

You will also have an opportunity to let your WTW case manager know about anything that might make it hard for you to work or participate in other activities.

After your appraisal, you and your WTW case manager will work together to decide which activities or services are right for you.



Step 3: Career Preparation

The initial career preparation period may include the following engagement activities, depending on your needs:

- **Job search.** Search for and apply to jobs in partnership with an employment specialist. An employment specialist will be available to guide and encourage you as you prepare to job search and meet with employers.
- **Job readiness.** Meet with an employment specialist to discuss your job skills, fill out and submit job applications, create a resume, practice interviewing, and learn what employers expect from you when you have a job.
- **Education.** Enroll in an education program for your high school diploma or an equivalent like a General Educational Development (GED), continue college, or enter a vocational training program. All types of educational pathways are available to WTW participants.
- **Family Stabilization.** If you are experiencing a crisis that is keeping you from being ready for work, the Family Stabilization program can help you and your family. Ask your WTW case manager if you are eligible for this program.
- **Mental health, substance use disorder, and domestic abuse services.** If you and your WTW case manager decide these services are the right ones for you, you may start them after your appraisal. If you decide to start any of these services, your WTW case manager will give you a referral for either an in-house-program or a program near you.
- **Other services.** Your WTW case manager will work with you to provide services based on your individual needs. This could include screening and services for learning needs, special work, education or other training programs, housing assistance, and family reunification services if you have a case with Child Welfare Services.



The Family Stabilization program can help you feel safe if you are experiencing domestic abuse, mental health issues or substance use disorders, homelessness, or are at risk for eviction, or if you have another special need.

***Note:** If you are already in college, you may be able to stay in school without needing to look for or get ready for work. Ask your WTW case manager if this is an option for you.*

After completing your initial engagement activities, you'll take an assessment, we'll celebrate what you've accomplished, and you'll get ready to reach your goals!



Step 4: Assessment

In this in-depth assessment, we will gather more information about your education and skills, talk about any other education or training you may want or need, and tell you about other services that might be good for you before you start thinking about work.

Note: You have the right to request an impartial third-party review of this assessment if you disagree with it. CalWORKs WTW will use the third-party review when we work on your WTW plan. [See page 20](#) for details. You can also ask for a third-party review if you disagree with your WTW plan.

After your assessment is done, you and your WTW case manager will make a WTW plan together.



Step 5: Create your CalWORKs WTW plan.

A chance to focus on your goals and the steps you can take to reach them!

Next, we explain how important your WTW plan is and how you can use it to meet your goals with the help of your WTW case manager.

Note: Some counties allow people to volunteer to participate in CalWORKs WTW activities before approving their cash aid application. You won't lose cash aid if you don't volunteer or if you don't fulfill the expectations agreed on in your voluntary activity assignment. After your cash aid is approved, unless you are exempt, you must meet certain program expectations.

Your WTW plan is your road map to success. It outlines (1) what you will do, including working, going to school, or other activities, to help you reach your goals, (2) the hours you need to participate, and (3) the services you can use to set yourself up for success.

Your WTW case manager will help you create your plan, celebrate your successes, coach you through challenges along the way, and ultimately help you reach your goals.

These are the parts of your plan that you and your WTW case manager will review together:

- **Rights and Responsibilities.** Explains the county's responsibilities, and your rights and responsibilities as a WTW participant. These rights and responsibilities apply to you as long as you are in CalWORKs.

- **CalWORKs WTW Participant Handbook.** This handbook, which is yours to keep.
- **Activity Assignment.** Explains WTW activities and the services you are eligible to receive. You will decide on which activities to participate in with your WTW case manager's help. Each time you start a new set of WTW activities, you will sign a new or revised activity assignment that tells you how many hours you must participate in that activity.
- **Program Notice.** Explains WTW requirements, including the hourly participation requirements.

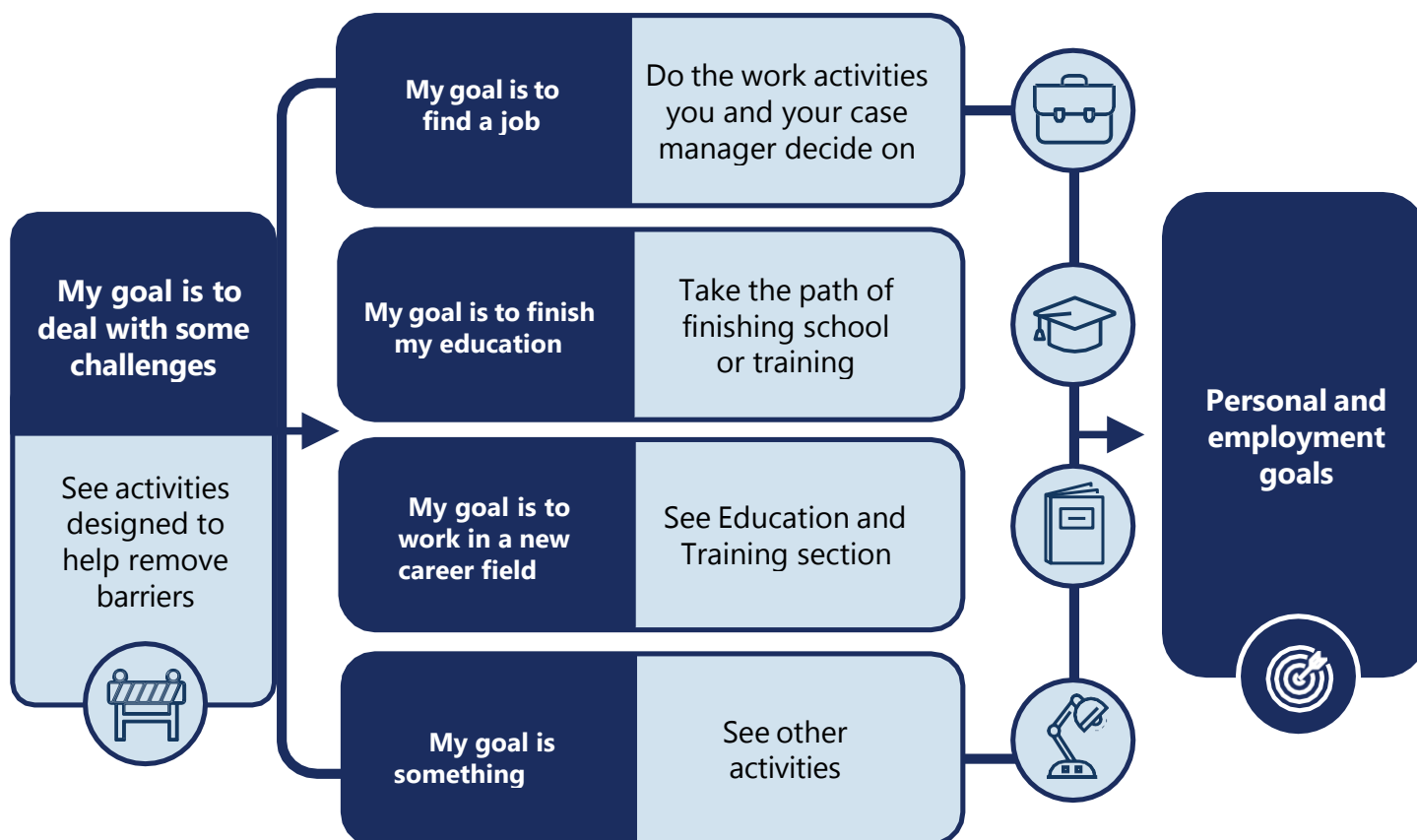


After you sign your CalWORKs WTW plan

If something in your life changes, and your current plan doesn't work for you anymore, talk to your WTW case manager right away. You and your WTW case manager must agree on any changes to your plan, and you must sign the plan once it's final.

Your WTW case manager will give you a copy of your plan to sign.

Here's an example of the goal setting you'll do with your WTW case manager:



What CalWORKs WTW Expects from You

CalWORKs WTW offers services and support to help you and your family. Together with your WTW case manager, you'll build a plan and connect with opportunities that will help you meet your goals.

If you are not exempt or excused from WTW, or do not have a valid reason for not participating, we expect you to:



Meet with your WTW case manager and set goals

☐ **Go to meetings in person or virtually, and stay in regular contact with your WTW case manager**

- Let your WTW case manager know if you need transportation or child care to make your appointments

☐ **Set goals with your WTW case manager**

- Choose goals you really care about
- Imagine how your life might be different if you met your goals



Create, review, and update a plan to make progress on your goals

☐ **Create your WTW plan together with your WTW case manager**

☐ **Review and update your plan with your WTW case manager. Contact your WTW case manager to update your plan if:**

- You need to change your plan, for instance, if your situation changes and you want to change your activities or need different services;
- You are asking to be exempt or have a valid reason why you cannot participate as outlined in your plan;
- The reasons why you can't participate change, or your exemption ends;
- You do not participate in activities or services as outlined in your plan; or
- You do not have to participate but want to volunteer to participate.



Progress on Your Goals

You must make progress towards your goals to keep your CalWORKs cash aid. This means following the agreement you made in your plan to do things like:

- ☐ Complete your WTW activity or activities;
- ☐ Meet the average weekly hour requirements in your plan;
- ☐ Tell your worksite supervisor, activity provider, and WTW case manager if something keeps you from doing the activities in your plan;
- ☐ Make satisfactory progress in an educational program when your school allows you to enroll for the next term;
- ☐ Provide the documents and verification your WTW case manager asks for;
- ☐ Keep your job and current pay level if you are employed (tell your WTW case manager if there is a problem at work)

Your notes:



Potholes and Detours

We know sometimes life does not go the way we plan it. **Tell your WTW case manager if you are having a hard time participating in the activities in your WTW Plan.** You may qualify for an exemption or for more services, or you may need to come up with other goals that are better for you at this moment.

What happens if I don't comply? You must meet the average weekly hour requirements in your plan unless you are exempt (excused) or participating as a volunteer. Exemptions are listed on [page 18](#). If you do not participate in the activities outlined in your WTW plan, we will give you chances to continue participating, but you will need to take the following steps to avoid having your cash aid decreased.

Tell your WTW case manager if you have “good cause,” meaning you have a valid reason for not participating:

- Explain why you did not participate.
- Your WTW case manager will decide if you have “good cause,” for not participating.
- If you have good cause, your cash aid will not be lowered.
- Depending on your situation, if your WTW case manager finds you did not have good cause for not participating, you must sign a compliance plan to avoid a decrease in your cash aid.

Sign a compliance plan. If your WTW case manager finds you did not have good cause, you can agree to follow a compliance plan. That plan tells you what you must do to avoid a decrease in your cash aid (sanction). This can be the activity you didn't do, or you can work with your WTW case manager to come up with different activities. You must complete the activities in your compliance plan to avoid a sanction. The compliance plan lasts until you complete the activity, or for activities that take longer than one month, it lasts 30 days. *The county will not ask you about good cause if you fail to do your compliance plan.*

You must tell the county if you have a problem doing the plan.

Sanction: Your cash aid will be decreased if you do not have good cause and you do not sign and complete your compliance plan.

Ending a Sanction: The county wants to work with you to keep sanctions from happening! Please contact your WTW case manager if your cash aid has been lowered and ask what you can do to get your cash aid back. If you agree to participate and sign a curing plan, your cash aid will increase.

CalWORKs WTW Activities

You will create your CalWORKs WTW plan with your WTW case manager so it's meaningful for you. Your plan will record the activities you will participate in to work toward your goals and meet your hourly requirements. Those activities might include:



Activities to address or remove barriers to participation

- **Services to help with mental health issues, substance use disorder, and domestic - abuse.** Counseling and other services are available to help you (see [page 5](#) for more detail).
- **Family Stabilization.** This program provides intensive case management and services for you, your family, and your child(ren) if you are having a crisis (see [page 5](#) for more detail).



Activities to support your education and professional development

- **Adult basic education.** These classes include reading, writing, math, high school proficiency, classes to help you get a GED, and English as a second language (ESL).
- **Satisfactory attendance in a secondary school (high school or equivalent).** Attend and complete classes to get a diploma or equivalent.
- **Postsecondary education.** An education program focused on academics (like college) or vocational training that you enroll in after getting a high school diploma or its equivalent.
- **Self-initiated program (SIP).** An education program in a private, for-profit college that leads to a job and that you were already enrolled in before you entered the CalWORKs Program.
- **Education directly related to employment.** Education related to a specific occupation, job, or job offer.
- **Job skills training directly related to employment.** A training or type of education that will help you gain job skills that prepare you for work or to advance in the workplace.
- **Vocational education.** Education or training that will build skills for a specific type of job.



Cal-Learn program. If you are a pregnant or parenting teen, talk to your WTW case manager about the supportive services that you can get.

Cal-Learn helps pregnant and parenting teens (under age 19) in achieving their education goals. Cal-Learn offers:

- Help with staying in school or going back to school to earn your high school diploma or equivalent, such as a GED.
- Case management and supportive services to connect you with resources and overcome any challenges you might face, such as child care assistance.
- Cash bonuses for earning good grades and receiving a high school diploma or equivalent.

Pregnant or parenting teens under the age of 19 who are receiving CalWORKs cash aid must do Cal-Learn. Cal-Learn teens who have not completed their high school diploma or equivalent by the time they turn 19 may choose to continue in Cal-Learn as a volunteer participant.

If you are a pregnant or parenting teen doing Cal-Learn, you do not have to do CalWORKs WTW activities. Once you turn 20 or graduate from high school or its equivalent (whichever comes first), you must do CalWORKs WTW activities to keep getting cash aid and benefits.

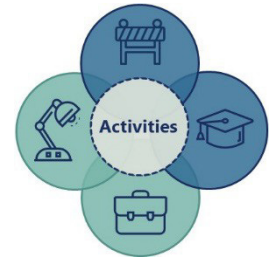


Home Visiting Program. Is a voluntary program supervised by the California Department of Social Services and administered by participating counties

Home Visiting Program (HVP). This program is offered by participating counties and provides home visiting services to pregnant individuals or a parent or caretaker of a child 24 months or younger at the time of enrollment. Participation is voluntary and you can choose to end it at any time. The HVP matches you with a trained professional who will offer you support, guidance, coaching, and connections to important resources that help improve **your** families' health, education, social, economic, and financial future.



Activities to help you find work and advance in a career



- **Unsubsidized employment.** A job an employer pays you to do.
- **Self-employment.** You own your own business and are not someone else's employee.
- **Subsidized employment.** A job with a private, public, or nonprofit employer where CalWORKs helps pay your salary.
- **Grant-based on-the-job training.** A job with a private or public employer where your employer receives your CalWORKs cash aid to help pay your salary.
- **On-the-job training.** A job where you work and receive training that is paid for by another agency.
- **Supported work or transitional employment.** On-the-job training paid for by CalWORKs.
- **Work study.** A job you have while you take classes at a college. Your pay is part of your financial aid, and another agency might pay all of it or share payment responsibility with CalWORKs WTW. Work study pay does not count against your cash aid.
- **Work experience.** An unpaid training activity that will help you build the knowledge and experience you need to get a paying job.
- **Community service.** An unpaid activity in your community that will help you build the knowledge and experience you need to get a paying job.
- **Job search.** The process of finding a job, with a chance to look for work with or without the help of employment specialists, counselors, or coaches.
- **Job readiness.** Activities like workshops on resume building, career paths, and life skills. In some counties, "job readiness" is called Job Club.



Other activities

- **Other activities that help you find a job.** Talk to your WTW case manager about other things, like getting a driver's license, that you might need to do to help you find a job.
- **Providing child care to a community service program participant.** You provide child care, paid or unpaid, to another CalWORKs participant who needs child care to participate in a community service activity.
- **Activities your child's school makes parents do.** Participating in activities on school property that your child's school requires. Examples are parent-teacher conferences or classroom participation.

CalWORKs WTW Supportive Services

You are eligible for WTW supportive services to help set you up for success! This applies even if you are a volunteer in the program. The services include:



Transportation. You can get transportation to and from your WTW activities and child care provider.

- You can get help with transportation for your CalWORKs WTW activities. If your CalWORKs WTW plan includes child care, you can also get transportation to and from your child care provider. If your children need transportation for you to do your activities, that may be available. Talk to your WTW case manager about your specific transportation needs and find out which costs are covered under transportation services.



Work-related and education-related expenses. If you need money for books, tools, special clothing, or other items for school or work, talk with your WTW case manager. You can get help with these expenses.

- If you have expenses you need to do your approved activity, and your school or employer will not cover them, your WTW case manager can give you payments for books, tools, special clothing, or other items for an interview, work, school, or training. Ask your WTW case manager what other necessary expenses may be covered by these payments.
- You may also be eligible to **get a set amount of money in advance** to help pay for books and other school supplies if you are attending an educational institution like a community college, university, or an adult school. Ask your WTW case manager what amount you may be eligible for and what you need to do to receive this money in advance.



Child care. Once you are approved for CalWORKs WTW, full-time child care is available for your children through age 12.

- Full-time child care is available to you right away to make sure your child(ren) are safe and cared for while you participate in CalWORKs WTW activities or complete other program activities. Child care may also be available on a part-time basis upon your request. Your children can receive care when you are working at home or doing online courses or homework for an education program. If you are a sanctioned parent working to finish the activities in your WTW compliance plan you can also receive child care.
- Once you are approved to get child care, no negative action can be taken against you for nonparticipation in CalWORKs WTW until you find child care, have your request CalWORKs WTW Services for child care denied, or state that you no longer need child care.

- Your WTW case manager can direct you to the agency that will help you find a child care provider. Your child care provider may be a licensed child care center, a licensed family child care home, a before- and/or after-school program, or license-exempt child care such as parent cooperatives, non-profit programs that offer recreational services, organized camps, or a friend, neighbor, or family member who is at least 18 years old.
- Parents or guardians looking for child care can reach out to their local Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R) agencies. R&Rs have a directory of child care providers and give information to parents looking for child care. R&Rs also help child care providers with training and licensing. R&Rs have a toll-free telephone number. If you would like their help, call 1-800-KIDS-7933. Parents or guardians can also use the [MyChildcarePlan.org](https://www.mychildcareplan.org) online search tool to look for licensed child care providers in their area.



Diaper payments. You are eligible to receive \$30 a month for each child younger than 36 months to help cover the cost of diapers.

Adults doing CalWORKs WTW activities who have at least one child under 36 months of age will get the diaper payment. Ask your WTW case manager for more information!



Post-employment services

After you leave CalWORKs WTW, you may still be able to get CalWORKs child care for up to 24 months if you meet eligibility requirements. If you have a job and need other supportive services to keep your job but are not able to get services or payment from somewhere else, your WTW case manager may be able to get case management and other services for you for up to 12 months. This support can help you maintain everything you've achieved so far.

Note: Some counties offer services to former participants after they have exhausted their CalWORKs 60-month time-on-aid limit. Talk to your WTW case manager to learn if this is available in your county.

Hour Participation Requirements

If you are participating in CalWORKs WTW, you must perform 20, 30, or 35 hours of CalWORKs activities each week. Your weekly hour requirement depends on your family type and will be in your CalWORKs WTW plan. Look at the table below with CalWORKs hour participation requirements to understand your weekly hour requirement.

CalWORKs hourly participation requirements

Family type	Age of youngest child	Average weekly hour requirement
Single-parent or optional stepparent	Younger than 6 years	20 hours
Single-parent or optional stepparent	6 years or older	30 hours
Two parents, one with a disability	Younger than 6 years	20 hours
Two parents, one with a disability	6 years or older	30 hours
Two parents, one ineligible	Younger than 6 years	20 hours
Two parents, one ineligible	6 years or older	30 hours
Two parents	Not applicable	35 hours (hours can be shared)



Volunteer participants

CalWORKs WTW is available to anyone who is eligible and wants to get support, even if they are not required to participate. Contact your WTW case manager to learn more about how to volunteer to participate.



Participants with teenagers

Your teenage children (ages 16–17) who are (1) **not** pregnant or parenting and (2) are **not** going to school, may be required to participate in CalWORKs WTW to help them complete high school or its equivalent. Talk with your WTW case manager to learn more about services available for your teenager.



Noncustodial parents

Your county may provide WTW services such as transportation, supplies for work, activities, and subsidized employment for noncustodial parents (NCPs) of a child/children in a CalWORKs case. An NCP is a parent of minor child who lives in the same state as the child but does not live in the home with the child. Participation in WTW and receipt of services is voluntary for the NCP, and they can end participation at any time. Contact your local county office to see if your county offers services to NCPs.

Exemptions from CalWORKs WTW

You are exempt from participating in CalWORKs WTW activities, but still eligible to receive cash aid and supportive services, if you are:

- A person with a disability that is expected to last at least 30 days and makes you medically unable to participate in your activities for the number of hours required;
- Younger than age 16;
- A teenager aged 16 or 17 who has a high school diploma or its equivalent and is enrolled or planning to enroll in a postsecondary educational, vocational, or technical school training program;
- A teenager aged 16, 17, or 18 who is attending school full-time, including grade twelve or below, vocational, or technical school;
- Age 60 or older;
- A nonparent caretaker relative who is caring for a child who is a dependent or ward of the state, or is at risk of being placed in foster care if providing that care prevents you from working or participating in your activities;
- Caring for a household member who has a disability or is sick if providing that care prevents you from working or participating in your activities for the number of hours required;
- Caring for a child younger than age 2;
- Pregnant;
- A full-time volunteer in the Volunteers in Service to America ([VISTA Program](#)); or
- Participating in Cal-Learn.

You may complete the [CalWORKs Exemption Request Form \(CW 2186A\)](#) at any time. Exemption requests will be made available at all times, including but not limited to at application or the annual eligibility redetermination. Your WTW case manager may ask you for documentation to make sure you qualify for an exemption. Months that you are exempt do not count toward your 60-month lifetime time-on-aid limit. If you have questions about your eligibility for WTW or about qualifying for an exemption, please contact your WTW case manager to learn more.



Domestic abuse waiver

Your safety is important to us. If someone is physically, sexually, or emotionally hurting you, is threatening to hurt you or your family members, or has hurt you or themselves in the past, please tell your WTW case manager immediately. Your WTW case manager can help you receive special services that can support you and your children. These services count as an activity in your CalWORKs WTW plan.

If you are currently experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse, you and your WTW case manager can discuss what program requirements may be waived based on your situation. **Talk to your WTW case manager about domestic abuse waivers.**



Excused from participation

If you are in a two-parent family, you may be excused from participating if the other parent in the home (who could be a stepparent) is fully meeting your family's participation requirement. Talk to your WTW case manager to learn more.



Good cause

If you have a temporary condition or circumstance that keeps you from participating in an assigned CalWORKs activity, talk to your WTW case manager. They will decide if you have valid reasons ("good cause") for not completing the activity. If you have good cause for not completing your activity, you will not be at risk of a sanction (penalty). More information can be found in the section titled What CalWORKs WTW Expects from You on [page 8](#). Some examples of good cause are:

- Not having the services you need
- Experiencing domestic abuse
- Child care is not reasonably available during your work hours
- Child care for children with special needs (such as a chronic illness or disability) is not available

What Can You Do If You Disagree with Your Plan, Services, or a Nonparticipation Action?

There are three things you can do if you disagree with your WTW case manager's decisions about your plan, your services, or a sanction you got for not participating in a CalWORKs activity. You have the right to:



1. Independent assessment

You can ask for an impartial third-party review of your assessment *if you do not agree with the results of your assessment or CalWORKs WTW plan*. The results of this independent assessment will be used to make a new CalWORKs WTW plan. If you ask for an independent assessment, sanctions will not be applied while you wait for the review to be completed.



2. State hearing

You can ask for a state hearing *if you disagree with any action the county takes on a CalWORKs WTW sanction, the participation requirements, activities, or your supportive services*. **You have 90 days to ask for a hearing.** The 90 days start the day after the county sends you a notice about an action or determination.

Your WTW case manager can help you ask for a state hearing. If you lose at your hearing, you can ask for a re-hearing. If you ask for a state hearing before an action takes place (such as a reduction to your cash aid or discontinuance of your child care), certain benefits may be eligible to stay the same until after your hearing. However, different rules will apply if you file for a state hearing for a non-CalWORKs county action (such as Medi-Cal or CalFresh).

Visit the [State Hearing Request page](#) online for more information on how to request a hearing. The [CalWORKs WTW Hearing Rights Form](#) also explains the rules, and the back of every Notice of Action form lists the ways you can ask for a state hearing.



3. Formal grievance

You can ask for a county grievance review of any specific program requirement or assignment *if you disagree with that CalWORKs WTW requirement or assignment*. The county board of supervisors creates the process in your county. Your WTW case manager can tell you how the grievance process works. If you use the formal grievance process, you must continue to meet CalWORKs WTW requirements until the grievance process ends so sanctions are not applied during the grievance process. The grievance process will not stop a sanction if you are not participating while you disagree with the county's action. Only a state hearing can do that.

Contact Information and Other Resources



Our goal is to help **YOU reach your goals!**

We are here to support you.

This handbook tells you about CalWORKs WTW and the services available to you. If you have any questions about this handbook, or need help understanding it, please let your WTW case manager know. Your WTW case manager will connect you with the services you need. If you need to see the information in this handbook in a different way that helps you understand it better, you may also ask for a reasonable accommodation.



County contact information

**County Program Services*

County Worker:

Phone:

Email:

Address:

Other resources



You can also receive legal support from your local legal aid office:

Phone:

Email:

Address:

OR

Coalition of California Welfare Rights Office

Address: 1111 Howe Ave., Suite 635, Sacramento, CA 95825

Phone: 916-736-0616

<https://www.ccwro.org/>