

WORKFORCE SERVICES
INFORMATION NOTICE

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TO: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

SUBJECT: PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES: FAMILY STABILIZATION
AND REUNIFICATION

The California Workforce Investment Board (State Board) is seeking partnerships with Local Workforce Investment Boards, America's Job Centers of CaliforniaSM (AJCC), county child welfare, health and human services, probation departments, housing and corrections agencies, workforce development agencies, and community/faith based organizations currently working with biological parents of children in foster care interested in testing new ideas and service strategies to reunite parents with their children.

California is the legal guardian to approximately 55,000 children in the foster care system and has prioritized reunifying them with their biological parents as quickly as possible. These parents are often experiencing mental health or substance use issues, unemployment and economic hardship, domestic violence, or incarceration. Studies indicate that over 50 percent of children in foster care will ultimately be returned to the custody of their family of origin. Assisting parents in stabilizing and sustaining their family will provide them with the skills they need to become self-sufficient, care for their children, and help their children successfully participate in school and in life.

The California Child Welfare Council has identified key services that families need in the reunification process: mental health, substance use, housing, workforce, and corrections/probation. Teams from state agencies responsible for these services are working to develop strategies and promising practices. Initial services design divides services into two phases: Stabilizing Families and Sustaining Families.

Phase 1 - Stabilizing Families

The initial services provided to parents should focus on family stability; ensuring that health treatment plans are in place; parents have learned parenting and coping skills; and barriers to stable housing, medical care, food, and income have been addressed. The plans for stabilizing and sustaining families can best be met by a multi-disciplinary service approach by local providers representing child welfare, public assistance, housing, child care resources, corrections/probation, and workforce development. Parents must be a part of the team, and work with counselors and case managers to develop a service plan to stabilize and sustain their family unit. Parents seeking to be

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reunited with their children must address specific barriers and fulfill court-ordered or required reunification plans. They often find themselves navigating multiple systems and responding to multiple case managers to get the services they need. A collaborative multi-disciplinary approach to assisting parents, with single points of contact in local agencies communicating about the goals and achievements of parents, will ensure that the reunification plan is aligned with the employment plan. Common characteristics of interventions that are most helpful in reunifying families include engagement of families in their plan; individualized needs assessment with clear, mutually established goals combined with on-going case management; and cognitive-behavioral, multi-systemic, skills-focused service delivery.

Local partners that may be included in the multi-disciplinary teams include the following:

- Health and Human Services

Each county in California provides child welfare services, mental health services, and alcohol and drug treatment. In addition, counties provide Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), which includes public assistance, food stamps, MediCal supports to eligible families, and the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program. The CalWORKs program provides vocational assessments, job search assistance, high school completion, vocational training, community work experience and subsidized employment.

- California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR)

In collaboration with Local Workforce Investment Boards, CDCR provides pre-release services through the California New Start program. These services include the following:

- Matching existing training and work opportunities in prison to jobs in communities.
- Providing Right-to-Work documents needed to secure employment prior to release from prison (e.g., Social Security card, birth certificate, selective service registration, etc.).
- Providing essential job prerequisites, (e.g., resumes, trade certificates, licenses for trade union memberships, etc.).
- Providing support to seek, secure, and maintain employment through a collaborative partnership with the AJCCs to link offenders to jobs and support.

- Housing and Redevelopment Agencies

Counties receive federal funding to support public housing for low-income individuals, housing voucher programs, homeless assistance programs, and rental or first-time home buyer assistance programs.

- Community/Faith Based Organizations or Community Action Agencies
These organizations provide family advocacy, family self-sufficiency, parenting classes, financial literacy, and counseling services in high poverty areas.
- Child Care Resources
Child Care resources can be accessed through the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network programs located in every county in California http://www.rnetwork.org/find_child_care. Resources include California Department of Education funded pre-school programs such as Head Start, Stage 1 and 2 child care supports, and alternative payment programs.
- Legal Aid
This service provides legal assistance for record expungement, court orders, traffic citations, etc.

Phase 2 - Sustaining Families

When the family's immediate stability needs have been addressed, partners in the system should focus on family sustaining services, which include education, training, and employment goals for parents. The AJCCs are uniquely positioned to assist parents and multi-disciplinary teams to create the plan and provide the services to sustain families that have been reunited. The AJCC can provide intensive and staff assisted career services including skills assessment; career coaching; job search assistance and design; and, in partnership with the parent, a plan to identify transferable skills, career goals, education and training needs, and job search strategies.

Services available at AJCCs may include the following:

- Job readiness assessment, including interviews and testing.
- Life skills, work readiness, and job retention workshops.
- Development of an employability development plan.
- Career guidance through group or individual counseling.
- Provision of labor market, occupational, and skills transferability information to inform educational, training, and occupational decisions.
- Access to CalJOBSSM, California's web-based job portal.
- Referral to employers and registered apprenticeship sponsors.
- Financial aid and scholarship information for individuals seeking training.
- Information on and referral to high school completion programs, English language programs, and adult education.
- Information on, referral to, and financial assistance for career technical education programs including community colleges, adult education, and private post-secondary training providers.
- Workforce development programs focusing on the special employment needs of out of school youth ages 18 to 24.

- Internships, subsidized employment, and on-the-job training.
- Job development and job placement.
- Follow-up and job retention services.

While AJCC informational and career services are available to everyone in need of employment assistance, intensive and training services focus on serving the most vulnerable workers, such as low income adults and youth who have limited skills, lack work experience, and face barriers to economic success. Many of these are challenges faced by parents seeking to reunite their family.

The following are workforce development strategies and interventions identified as meeting the needs of parents in the Sustaining Families phase of reunification:

- Collaboration of social workers, social services, and workforce staff at AJCCs
- Multi-disciplinary children and family teams include AJCC coaches and case plans, including job training and employment goals
- Identification of a single point of contact in each agency to act as a liaison between AJCCs and social workers
- Cross-training staff to understand the linkages between the agencies tasked with serving parents and children in foster care
- Collaboration between AJCCs and CDCR's California New Start pre-release program
- AJCCs working with legal aid to provide expungement services to clear criminal records, thus supporting job placement
- AJCCs and social service agencies provide skills training and subsidized wage programs that train and place workers in high demand occupations
- AJCCs and social service agencies work with the courts to decrease child support payment burdens for parents participating in job training
- Collaboration with community action agencies on family self-sufficiency strategies

The State Board and the Child Welfare Council are seeking to identify and support local partnerships that include child welfare, housing, workforce, behavioral health care, corrections/probation and community based organizations, and that accelerate access to workforce services for families in reunification with the goal of identifying replicable practices at the county level to inform statewide policy and practice.

If you would like further information on family stabilization and reunification partnership opportunities, contact Robin Purdy at the State Board at Robin.Purdy@cwib.ca.gov or 916-657-1474.

/S/ JOSÉ LUIS MÁRQUEZ, Chief
Central Office Workforce Services Division