

CalWORKs Campus County Partnerships Toolkit



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Contents

- Introduction1
- Common Challenges Across Partnerships2
- Partnership Development Models3
- Sample Action Plan4
- Template for Getting Started5
- Best Practices for Developing an MOU6
- Exhibit A. Customizable Program Flyer11

Introduction

CalWORKs Enrollment and Student Success: Strengthening Campus-County Partnerships

Effective partnerships between California Community College CalWORKs staff and county partners are built on a shared vision and a coordinated approach to serving mutual clients. Strong campus–county collaborations emphasize a unified service model that reduces the need for students to navigate multiple systems. This is achieved by streamlining referral processes, aligning documentation requirements, and communicating with a consistent voice.

To ensure sustainability, these partnerships should be formalized through agreements that clearly define roles and responsibilities, allowing collaboration to endure beyond individual relationships. In practice, co-located services—supported by regular check-ins and ongoing engagement opportunities such as cross-training and college tours—help foster mutual understanding and trust. When feasible, providing dedicated on-campus workspace for county staff further strengthens this partnership by promoting a sense of belonging and reinforcing a shared commitment to student success.

This toolkit offers resources to support the development and strengthening of these partnerships. It includes sample partnership goals and action plans, best practices for creating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and a customizable program flyer to help inform county staff and prospective CalWORKs students about the program’s goals and benefits at your campus.



Common Challenges Across Partnerships

Addressing common challenges in campus-county engagement is crucial for developing and scaling successful, sustainable partnerships

Source: Interviews with college CalWORKs directors



Understanding of higher education

Some local DSS workers' **limited experience with higher education** can limit collaboration and referrals, making **knowledge-sharing** essential



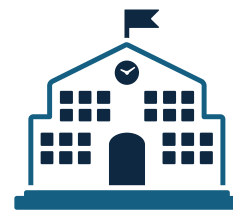
Different working styles

Conflicting working styles on college (more flexible and individualized) and at the county (more procedural) requires **mutual adaptation**



Dependence on individual relationships

High turnover at counties necessitates **understanding across local DSS staff** and structures like a formalized MOU



Physical space limitations

College infrastructure limits the number of county workers on campus; scalability requires **partnership to extend beyond physical presence**



Campus-county partnership | Partnership streamlines referrals and coordinates supports to boost enrollment and reduce student burden

Partnership starting point

Partnership development models

Illustrative and non-exhaustive

Colleges should adapt campus-county partnership intervention according to current-state partnership and college priorities



Relationship initiation

- **Approach:** Identify the **key local DSS point of contact** for a potential partnership and initiate relationship with **visit to campus**
- **Outcome:** **First-hand experience and knowledge** empowers local DSS workers to refer clients



MOU articulating partnership model

- **Approach:** Co-create a formal **MOU** to articulate partnership goals and distinct **roles & responsibilities**
- **Outcome:** Institutionalize **unified approach** for supporting CalWORKs students that transcends one-off relationships



County attendance at college events

- **Approach:** Encourage county **participation in college events** (e.g., CalWORKs Regional meetings, other campus events)
- **Outcome:** Promote **knowledge-sharing and organic connection** where staff and students feel recognized and valued



Consistent college co-location

- **Approach:** Develop a **regular co-location model** to bring local DSS employees (e.g., job specialists, eligibility workers) on campus
- **Outcome:** **Limit students' back-and-forth** between campus and local DSS (e.g., for updated documentation)



Joint services delivery

- **Approach:** Work in tandem to deliver a **unified service** to clients through orientation, case management, and other supportive activities
- **Outcome:** Students receive **integrated support** from both county and college, streamlining service to students



v Illustrative

Sample action plan | Effective campus-county partnerships require multiple steps to properly coordinate on goals, activities, and case management

Source: Interviews with college CalWORKs directors


 Define goals & personnel

- **Identify correct college and local DSS contacts**
- **Host meeting to discuss goals** (e.g., increase student completions, referrals)
- **Identify ~2-3 partnership activities to pursue** based on staff capacity
- *[As able]* **Identify dedicated personnel to own the partnership**



 Conduct activities to improve partnership

- Partnership activities could include...*
- **Regular campus co-location** for county workers (e.g., Employment Counselors)
 - **College tours** for all county workers
 - **Organize joint CalWORKs events**
 - **Joint case management**
 - **Share recurring student barriers / questions** to streamline student support
 - **Streamlined referrals** for new students

 Structure the process for sharing information

- Create robust, formal structure for information-sharing:*
- Establish **documentation-sharing processes** between CalWORKs and local DSS (e.g., for student performance records)
 - **Establish channels for communicating benefits determination updates**
 - *[As desired]* **Incorporate data-sharing into MOU** to more easily gather and leverage county data (e.g., through CalSAWS access)



 Monitor and share progress

- **Track partnership success metrics** utilizing data from both college & county (e.g., increase in completions, increase in enrollment)
- **Meet periodically (e.g., monthly)** to discuss caseload and refine partnership
- **Co-develop marketing materials** to incentivize potential CalWORKs students to pursue higher education



Template for getting started | Identify 2-3 partnership activities based on discrete goals, staff capacity, and current state of partnership

Goal

Partnership opportunities and activities



**Campus
co-location**



**Streamline
CalWORKs
student
referrals**



**Simplify
Document
Sharing**



Community College-County Partnerships: Best Practices for Developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

This resource is intended to serve as a starting point for colleges and counties to formalize their partnership in support of CalWORKs participants. An effective MOU establishes shared goals and expectations, clarifies roles and responsibilities, clearly outlines deliverables, strengthens accountability, and ensures compliance with applicable state and local laws and regulations.

Colleges are encouraged to work collaboratively with their county partners in development of an MOU that reflects local priorities, operational realities, and available resources.

Before finalizing any agreement, partners should seek appropriate legal and/or administrative review to ensure alignment with institutional and county policies.

Step 1: Begin with a Clear Purpose Statement

The purpose section sets the tone for the partnership. It should clearly articulate:

- The intention to collaborate in serving CalWORKs participants.
- The shared goal of improving educational outcomes and employability.
- A commitment to promoting economic mobility.

Example Language:

This MoU establishes a partnership between [College] and [County] to provide coordinated educational and supportive services to California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) recipients enrolled in community college programs. The goal is to enhance participants' educational attainment and employability, ultimately promoting economic mobility.

Step 2: Define the Target Population

Clearly identify who will be served under the agreement.

Example Language:

CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work (WTW) recipients attending [College].

Step 3: Specify the Start and End Dates of the Agreement

Clearly state the Agreement's start and end dates, as well as the terms for renewal and the process for amendments.

Step 4: Clearly Outline Roles and Responsibilities

This is the most important section of the MOU. It should clearly define the roles, responsibilities, and commitments of each party.

Example Language:

[College]

[College] agrees to provide the following services:

1. Educational Counseling and Planning:

- a. Develop personalized student educational plans (SEP) aligned with participants' Welfare-to-Work (WTW) plans.*
- b. Facilitate orientation, course selection, and enrollment assistance.*

2. Student Support Services:

- a. Connect participants to relevant on-campus support services within and outside the campus CalWORKs program (e.g., Basic Needs Center, EOPS, DSPS)*
- b. Offer work-study opportunities to meet participation hour requirements.*
- c. Ensure access to on-campus childcare services or referrals to external providers.*
- d. Provide academic progress monitoring and intervention for at-risk students.*

3. Collaboration and Reporting:

- a. Share relevant educational progress data with [County], adhering to confidentiality requirements.*
- b. Participate in regular check-ins with county staff to address participant needs.*
- c. As available, provide office space as [Campus] CalWORKs office and service sites to co-locate county staff*

[County]

[County] agrees to provide the following services:

1. Referrals and Verification:

- a. Refer eligible CalWORKs participants to [College] for [College] CalWORKs orientation*
- b. Provide verification of participant eligibility and communicate any changes in status at the beginning of each semester and as needed by staff*

2. Supportive Services:

- a. Ensure timely provision of supportive services such as childcare, transportation, and book/supply reimbursements.*
- b. Provide access to county case managers for problem resolution.*

3. Coordination and Compliance:

- a. Facilitate compliance reviews and progress monitoring for participants enrolled in educational programs.*
- b. Participate in regular check-ins with campus staff to address participant needs.*
- c. Assign and co-locate county staff to the [Campus] CalWORKs Program Office*

Mutual Responsibilities

Both parties agree to:

- 1. Information Sharing:** *Maintain confidentiality while sharing participant data necessary for program coordination and compliance.*
- 2. Staff Training and Engagement:** *Participate in cross-training sessions to align on procedures and service delivery*
- 3. Communication:** *Schedule quarterly meetings to discuss program outcomes, address challenges, and plan improvements.*

Step 5: Address Funding Clearly

If funding is included in the agreement, be sure to specify:

- The total funding amount.
- The payment structure (e.g., reimbursement, quarterly installments).
- An itemized budget.
- Allowable uses of funds.
- Conditions for payment (e.g., compliance requirements, reporting obligations, availability of funds).

This information ensures financial expectations and accountability are clearly established.

Example Language:

Funding and Payment Terms

*Subject to the terms of this Agreement, [County] agrees to provide [College] with funding in an amount not to exceed **\$(total amount)** to support the activities described herein.*

*Payment shall be made in accordance with the following structure: **[reimbursement for actual expenses incurred / quarterly installments / other structure]**.*

*An itemized budget detailing projected expenditures is attached as **Exhibit A** and incorporated into this Agreement by reference.*

*Funds may be used solely for allowable costs directly related to the implementation of this Agreement, including **[brief examples, if desired—e.g., personnel, equipment, instructional materials, supportive services]**, and must comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.*

Payment is contingent upon [College]’s compliance with all terms of this Agreement, including required performance measures and reporting obligations. Disbursement of funds is further subject to the continued availability of appropriated funds.

Step 6: Include Confidentiality and Legal Compliance

Legal review is especially important for this section.

Example Language:

Both parties shall adhere to state and federal laws, including Welfare and Institutions Code Section 10850, ensuring participant information is handled securely and disclosed only as permitted.

Step 7: Define Performance Metrics

Performance metrics help measure the success of the partnership. Metrics should be realistic, measurable, and mutually agreed upon.

Example Language:

Performance will be measured based on:

- 1. Percentage of participants meeting academic milestones (e.g., achievement of good academic standing).*
- 2. Successful completion rates of educational programs.*
- 3. Percentage of participants matched to a work study position related to their major or career.*

Step 8: Identify Points of Contact and Finalize Signatures

Whenever possible, designate individuals with decision-making authority to serve as the primary points of contact. Confirm that all signatories have the authority to bind their respective organizations.

Exhibit A. Customizable Program Flyer



California
Community
Colleges



Strengthening County & College Partnerships Through CCC CalWORKs

Helping Families Through Education + Support

How counties and community colleges work together to help CalWORKs families succeed

Why County + College Partnership Matters

County caseworkers and local community colleges share the same goal: helping CalWORKs families become more stable, skilled, and financially secure. When counties refer CalWORKs participants to their nearby community college, families get both the financial support of CalWORKs and the educational, career, and wrap-around supports offered by the college.

Benefits to Counties:

- Helps participants meet Welfare-to-Work requirements
- Helps counties increase work participation rates
- Reduces long-term reliance on public assistance
- Strengthens coordination and communication around each family's plan

Benefits to Families:

- Easy access to college programs
- Support to manage school, work, and parenting
- Pathways to better jobs and long-term stability

What the CCC CalWORKs Program Provides

CalWORKs students at community colleges may receive:

- One-on-one case management
- Academic counseling and help choosing classes
- Child care support
- Paid Work Study job opportunities
- Help meeting county Welfare-to-Work rules
- Referrals to food, housing, financial aid, and more

Reach Out to Your Campus Contact

What Counties Need to Know

Community colleges have CalWORKs specialists who work directly with county caseworkers to support shared clients. Colleges also provide documentation, progress updates, and verification of participation.

This partnership helps CalWORKs students stay in compliance, remain enrolled, and move toward stable careers and economic mobility.

Student Snapshot - FY 24-25 Statewide Totals

- 25,200 CalWORKs students statewide
- 7,465 degrees & certificates earned
- 2,300+ Work Study positions
- 99,000+ dependents statewide

Counties: Connect with your local California Community College to refer CalWORKs participants and build a partnership that supports long-term family stability.

Potential Students: Ask your county CalWORKs caseworker to connect you to your college's CalWORKs Program to get support while you pursue your goals.

College Highlights and Information
