



KEEPING LINKED

LINKAGES - CalWORKs and Child Welfare Collaboration to Improve Outcomes

April - June, 2016, Volume 18

Annual Convening

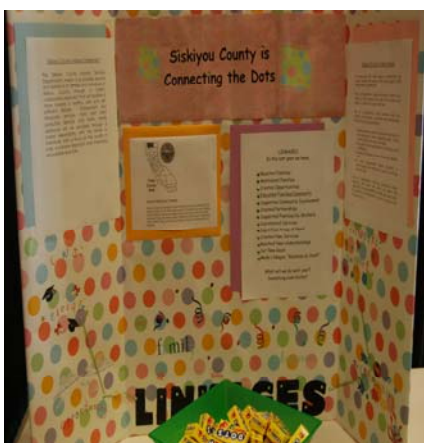
Beyond the Horizon, Full Steam Ahead

May 3-4, 2016
Queen Mary, Long Beach CA



It's that time of year again.....the annual Linkages Convening will be held next month, on May 3rd and 4th, in Long Beach on the historic Queen Mary. We hope that all of the twenty-eight counties' Linkages Teams will participate in this event. Many thanks to the Planning Committee-- **Gloria Rojas-Jakini , Dave Yada, Brandon Evans, Emily Steward, Victor Medrano, Belinda Benassi, Roxanne Stephens, and Cathy Cheso,**-- who worked with Project staff, **Leslie Ann Hay** and **Danna Fabella**, to develop a program that shares best practices, opportunities for peer sharing and inspiration from families that have been served by Linkages.

Back by popular demand is the evening reception and the Linkages counties' Story Board competition. As in years past, this "competition" offers each county's team the opportunity to create a "story" that tells everyone something that represents Linkages in their county. Pick up poster board at your local hobby store--many counties use those tri-fold boards. Then using whatever material you find, create your "story". These story boards are displayed during the evening reception and everyone gets to vote (using dots) for their favorite "story". It's a lot of fun and a way to learn something about other counties. So have fun with this and come to the Convening to learn from one another and to network with your colleagues.



The Story of Mary: Ups, Downs, and Back on Top

By Lori Gray, Stanislaus County

Mary, who had been using drugs since the age of 12, was referred to Child Protective Service when her newborn tested positive for drugs. Mary's history included domestic violence due to her mother's anger and drug use and the fact they were chronically homeless resulting in Mary being placed into foster care. However, Mary would run away from her foster home sometimes living with friends and sometimes with her grandparents.

While in the hospital she told the emergency response worker that she wanted to stop using and that she wanted a better life. She was moved to the Redwood's Family Center and began First Step AOD treatment. It was a struggle for those first few months since she was used to being on her own, coming and going as she pleased. The rules, regulations and structure of a clean and sober facility were something she was not comfortable with. She had trouble bonding with her baby.

A Learning Disability screening was completed and she was found not to have a Learning Disability. Next, a Behavioral Health Services (BHS) screening was completed and she was referred to BHS where she was scheduled for one on one weekly sessions with a counselor. Mary's attitude changed and everything improved including her attendance and her parenting. Soon she was moving through the phases of First Step.

CPS closed her case 6 months prior to graduation, but she continued to thrive. When she reached Phase III, she was anxious to begin something that would help her get a job. A WtW appointment was scheduled and she expressed an interest in CNA training. She was able to attend the CNA Orientation and begin training while completing First Step. Mary struggled with the note taking portion of class, therefore, a tape recorder was issued through supportive services. During this time Mary graduated from First Step.

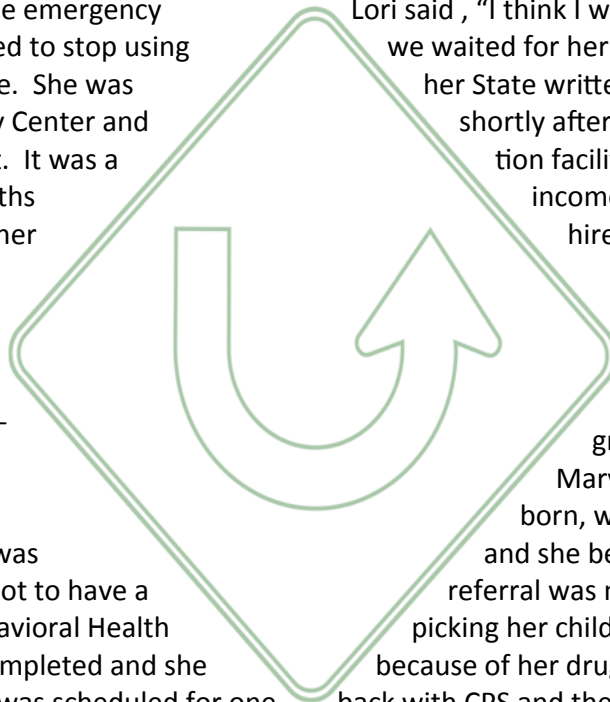
When Lori Gray, her social worker was emailing the

coordinator of the CNA program concerning a matter of a missing voucher, she expressed appreciation for the work they did with customers from the Agency and the coordinator from CNA wrote in an email that "I really enjoy working with the CSA customers. I have met some truly wonderful people who work very hard to succeed while they are here. Your Mary is a great example. She was just a joy to work with! She will be a fantastic CNA!"

Lori said, "I think I was as nervous as she was, while we waited for her State written test." Mary passed her State written test with flying colors and shortly afterwards was hired by a rehabilitation facility. Maryellen became over income for cash aid shortly after being hired.

But Mary's story doesn't end there. A couple of years later, Mary experienced some family sorrows. Her grandmother passed away and Mary had another child born still-born, which triggered some old feelings and she began using drugs again. A referral was made to CPS because she wasn't picking her children from school in a timely way, because of her drug use. When Mary found herself back with CPS and the Family Maintenance Unit she didn't want to face her trauma and refused to come in for her assessment. The strong will of a good social worker and her boyfriend convinced her to go into inpatient treatment. She graduated from the inpatient program and began outpatient treatment along with mental health counseling.

Lori said, "I'll never forget calling her when I was assigned her case and asked her how she was doing. After explaining what led her back to CPS she stressed that she was going to succeed this time and be strong. I believed her. After completing everything on her Child Welfare caseplan, the case was closed. Mary moved to Oregon to live with her brother. Several years later she called and stated that she was getting approved for Section 8 and had a job. She is doing well!"



What's New with CalWORKs?

Governor's Budget- CalWORKs

The Governor has presented a "workload" budget that funds the requirements of current law while reflecting the latest caseload estimates. There are no new policy proposals for Welfare-to-Work Division; however, increasing CalFresh participation remains an important goal for CDSS. There is a budget change proposal (BCP) to add five state staff with a goal of enrolling an additional 400,000 children in CalFresh over the next two years.

Funding for certain recently created programs remains unchanged for 2016-17:

- ✓ Legal Services for Undocumented Unaccompanied Minors \$3 million
- ✓ Immigration Assistance \$15 million
- ✓ Drought Food Assistance Program \$18.4 million
- ✓ CalWORKs Housing Support \$35 million

CalWORKs Work Participation Rate (WPR) Update

California faces penalties totaling almost \$900 million for failure to meet federal WPR requirements from FFY 2008 through FFY 2012. To avoid or reduce penalties, California has submitted Corrective Compliance Plans (CCPs) for FFY 2015 and 2016.

Due to the hard work of county staff, CDSS staff, and our clients, California achieved a 55 percent WPR in FFY 2015, according to preliminary data. If confirmed by ACF, this would eliminate approximately \$341 million in penalties related to 2008 through 2010. It is imperative that everyone continue their efforts in engaging clients, so that the state can remain above 50 percent during FFY 2016 and avoid \$558 million in penalties tied to the 2016 CCP.

State and county efforts to engage and assist clients in moving toward self-sufficiency have raised the base WPR to 35 percent. Successful implementation of WINS added another 20 percentage points, raising the total WPR to 55 percent. Improving the base participation rate and helping clients increase their earnings is especially important to our efforts to reduce poverty.

If a family of three can earn \$800 per month, their combined CalWORKs, CalFresh, state/federal EITC, and other benefits raises their monthly resources to \$2,085 per month. This amount is above both the official poverty measure and the supplemental poverty measure (which takes into account California's high housing costs).

CalWORKs Housing Support Program (HSP)

HSP is a rapid re-housing program that assists families in quickly obtaining permanent housing by offering financial assistance and wrap-around services to foster housing retention. The HSP allocation increased in SFY '15-'16 from \$20 million in 20 counties to \$35 million in 44 counties. It is estimated that almost 15,000 homeless children, within about 6,500 families will be served by HSP in the first 2 years of program implementation.



Madera Success Story: Child Welfare & Welfare to Work: Collaboration equals Success

This is a story involving a single parent on CalWORKs and a Child Welfare Services (CWS) intervention occurred. The mother, thirty-one years old, with a history of substance abuse, had three children, ages 17, 10, and 2 years were removed from her care during the last trimester of pregnancy of her fourth child. The CWS plan outlined the need for inpatient treatment, periodic drug testing and some other activities. When the CWS/WTW coordinated case plan was written it focused solely on the CWS activities, which superseded all the WTW activities.

The mother entered a treatment program without her children and made significant progress and completed the six-month treatment program. While in the program, she gave birth and the newborn was able to stay with her in the program. Upon completion of the inpatient program she entered into transitional housing, which is a component of the treatment offered by the rehabilitation program.

During the transitional housing stage the mother continued to receive aftercare treatment. She was reunited with the other 3 children while she was in transitional housing. The mother successfully graduated from treatment and consistently tested negative. Upon leaving the facility, which was located in a neighboring county, the family returned to Madera in a homeless situation.

The Child Welfare Social Worker (CWS) and Welfare to Work (WtW) Case Manager coordinated efforts to assist the mother to secure a spot for herself and all her children at the Madera Rescue Mission. At the same time the assigned WTW case manager began to work providing assistance to the family through the Housing Support Program. After completion of the maximum 30 day stay at the Rescue Mission an extension was given to allow the family an additional three (3) weeks. The mother became actively involved in volunteer work as she stayed at the rescue mission.

The CWS Social Worker had also submitted a referral for the Housing Authority's Family Unification Program. The client was approved right before the end to her extension at the Rescue Mission. Still permanent housing had not been obtained. At this point the WTW Case Manager worked on placing the family at a local motel initially covered for one week through the funding of Housing Support Program (HSP). The mother was able to find an apartment by November 15th but it would not be available to move in until December first. The WTW case manager obtained approval to extend the family's stay at the motel for additional two weeks as well as approval for payment of an unpaid PG & E balance of \$575 that was getting in the way of the approval for the application the client had submitted for the available apartment. This facilitated the qualification process and the landlord rented the apartment to the mother. HSP also approved assistance with moving costs such as security deposit, first month's rent and some furniture such as beds for the children and a dining set.

Shortly after the family moved to their new apartment a joint home visit was completed by WTW case manager and CWS social worker to re-assess the family's situation. The mother was informed by CWS Social Worker about the final issues connected with her upcoming court date where the recommendation to dismiss the CWS case was to be discussed. The WTW case manager collected additional information and

AB 429 Linkages & Family Reunification: Research from San Francisco HSA

The following is a summary of the Research conducted by Miguel A Becerra, MA, MSW Intern, UC Berkeley for the County of San Francisco Human Services Agency with assistance from Elizabeth C Harris, PhD, Senior Data Analyst, SF Human Services Agency, dated 2/1/2016

The Linkages Subcommittee in San Francisco was interested in understanding whether implementing AB 429, which allows for the continuation of CalWORKs Supportive Services, such as substance abuse treatment, domestic violence services, and mental health services to parents when their child(ren) has been removed from the home by child welfare services, resulted in better outcomes for families. A research project was launched to determine whether AB 429 Linkages services increased the probability that families in the child welfare system would reunify.

The literature review in preparation for the research revealed that there are a variety of factors that are related to reunification, such as family engagement, placement type, removal reason, race/ethnicity and household composition. The key factor that increased reunification seemed to be the level of family engagement. The Child Welfare Gateway identified four indicators to gauge the level of family engagement: the relationship between worker and family, parent-child visitation, involvement of foster parents, and involvement of a mentor.

Methodology

The researchers used administrative child welfare data to determine whether the use of AB429 Services had a greater probability of reunification as well as whether the speed of reunification was affected. All Linkages cases that entered the system in 2011-2012 were compared with all other cases that entered during that same time period. Entry cohorts were used since exit cohorts exclude populations who never left the system. The sample population included 79 families that received Linkages services and 765 families that did not receive AB429 Linkages services. The researchers were not able to determine how many families were in fact eligible for these services, but they stated that it was improbable that only 79 families were eligible for these services. The variables they were able to control for were race/ethnicity, when the child entered the system, type of placement, and whether it was the child's first time in the system.

Due to the lack of quantitative data to assess the direct impact of AB 429 Linkages, qualitative data was gathered through interviews with social workers.

Findings

"In the first logistic regression model, controlling for limited other factors, including race/ethnicity, age when the child entered the system, and whether it was the child's first time in the system, it appears that families that received AB429 Linkages services were more likely to be reunified than families not receiving AB429 Linkages services, as 62% of families on AB429 were reunited while only 47% of families not on AB429 achieved FR. In other words, families on AB429 Linkages were 1.67 times more likely to be reunified than families not on AB429 Linkages (see Graph). This finding was of marginal statistical significance. (By statistical significance, we are referring to the degree to which a result is not attributed to chance.) ($p < .04$). We also tried to determine whether those families who received AB429 Linkages services reunified with their children more quickly than those in the control group but we found no significant relationship in time to reunification. Likewise, we attempted to take into consideration other variables, such as number of spells in child welfare, but found no statistical significance for those other variables."

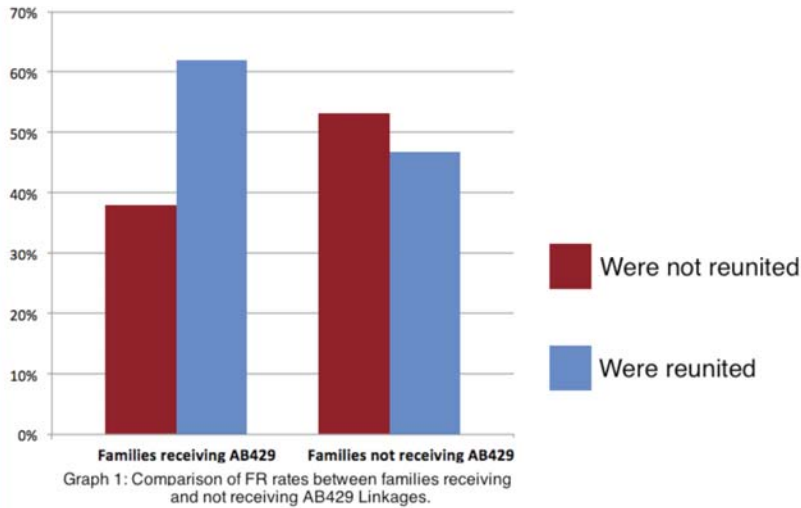
Qualitative data gathered through interviews with social workers indicates that they do believe that economic deprivation makes it harder for children and parents to reunify. Therefore based on that assumption by providing benefits to support families allows them to focus their efforts on reunification. However, there is no clear data that indicates that receiving AB 429 Linkages is the main factor as to why these families reunified at a higher rate.

Additionally, the researchers found that lack of clarity by social workers regarding the referral process for AB 429 Linkages and thus referrals are inconsistent and that it was therefore difficult to adequately assess the impact of the benefits of AB 429 Linkages to the client population. However, the initial data show a positive relationship between AB 429 Linkages and reunification.

AB 429 Linkages & Family Reunification

Con't from Pg. 5

At the Statewide Project, we applaud San Francisco for embarking on this research to determine the impact of the Linkages Collaboration. We greatly appreciate their willingness to share this research so that counties might consider how to improve Linkages, specifically the referral process and the steps that a county might take to improve tracking and measuring the impact of their work.



Families receiving AB429 Linkages	Number of families	Percentage
Were reunited	49	62%
Were not reunited	30	38%
Total	79	100%

Families not receiving AB429 Linkages	Number of families	Percentage
Were reunited	358	47%
Were not reunited	407	53%
Total	765	100%

Table 1: Comparison of FR rates between families receiving and not receiving AB429 Linkages

Madera Success Story

Con't from Pg. 4

confirmed that the mother was in a position to continue paying her portion of the rent after the HSP subsidy ended. Additionally, she was to exhaust her 48 months of CalWORKs by the following month so during the joint home visit a “Time out assessment” was completed. The mother confirmed that she had been offered a position as a P/T cashier at a local store.

In retrospective, the progress that occurred in the case is a reflection of the collaboration that was consistently sustained by both sides of the Linkage effort; the CWS SW involvement along with combined efforts with WTW case manager. The team had a positive effect in supporting the motivation and determination displayed by the parent in the case. All three (3) events that the county has outlined for Linkages cases in Madera County occurred in this case.

- ✓ A coordinated Linkage case plan with input from the client, the CWS Social Worker and WTW case manager was formulated and signed.
- ✓ Continued communication between CWS and WTW was manifested as the case reached different stages of progression.
- ✓ Also at least one joint home visit was completed by the two workers, which gave the client a strong signal to reaffirm the consistency of the consolidated effort that was offered from the very beginning.

Expanding Linkages' Reach: Helping Vulnerable Families Access the Benefits they Need

With the new [Benefit Access Toolkit](#), counties now have clear guidance to better support the basic needs of vulnerable families. Whether a family is receiving services from Child Welfare only, CalWORKs only or both, Benefit Access is a way to extend the reach of Linkages through collaborative arrangements with public service agencies. CWS and CalWORKs staff can help families access benefits that help lift them out of poverty, and in doing so, reduce risk for entry (or re-entry) into the child welfare system.

In March, "Benefit Access" became the latest tool to join the Linkages Toolkit. A dedicated workgroup of Linkages staff from three counties deserve a big thanks for their contributions and local expertise:

Santa Clara: Richard Ching, Orlando Ramirez, Roxanne Stephens

Fresno: Johnny Alaniz, John Dufresne, Lindsey Harris

LA: Cecelia Aguilar, Maria Hunt, Gloria Rojas-Jakini, Hilda Sanchez, Dudley Tolido, David Yada

The Benefit Access Toolkit offer counties two useful tools: one is a Road Map for developing Benefit Access strategies, the other is a search tool for identifying publicly available statewide services.

Benefit Access Road Map

Let's say your county has a goal of expanding your Linkages program by developing a Benefit Access strategy to reach out to vulnerable families. The [Benefit Access Road Map](#) is structured around a six step process that will help guide you through planning how to get this strategy off the ground. You'll find guidance on how to design, develop and launch your new Benefit Access strategy.

Like the other Road Maps on the Linkages Toolkit, each step includes bits of advice, helpful resources and concrete county examples. In #5, for instance, you can read the details about three examples of Benefit Access strategies:

[LA CalWORKs/GA Expedited Screening Tool](#)

[LA Co-Located CalWORKs Expert at CWS](#)

[Santa Clara: Court-Based Linkages Liaison Strategy](#)

The screenshot shows the Linkages website interface. At the top, the Linkages logo is displayed with the tagline 'CALWORKS & Child Welfare Collaboration'. A navigation menu includes 'Home', 'Site Map', and 'Contact'. Below the menu, a breadcrumb trail reads '> Definitional > Assessment & Planning > Training > Evaluation > Communication > Fiscal > Sustainability > Benefit Access'. A search bar is present, and a sidebar menu lists '> Overview', '> Benefit Access Road Map', and '> Human Services Benefit Search Tool'. The main heading is 'Benefit Access Road Map'. Below this, a breadcrumb trail shows 'Home > Overview > Benefit Access Road Map'. The main content area begins with a paragraph: 'Designing the type of benefit access strategy you want to implement begins with an understanding the unmet basic needs of Linkages families, followed by knowing the terrain of available public services, both local and statewide, then gathering the right players to create protocols that ensure better access to the services and resources available in your county. Use the tips and resources contained in the road map steps below to guide your planning process.' This is followed by a numbered list item: '1. Determine which target populations have unmet basic needs that could be addressed by access to public benefits.' Below this, a paragraph explains: 'Your Linkages program focuses on specific families who are involved both in Child Welfare Services and CalWORKs. A Benefit Access strategy encourages counties to expand Linkages services to a broader group of families—especially those in your county who are traditionally underserved. In this step, spend time with your Linkages team to identify families in your county who have basic unmet needs and are experiencing barriers to accessing available benefits.' A section titled 'Possible families:' lists two items: 'Foster youth emancipating from CWS' and 'Noncustodial parent'. A photograph of a smiling man and woman is visible on the right side of the page.

Con't on Pg. 8

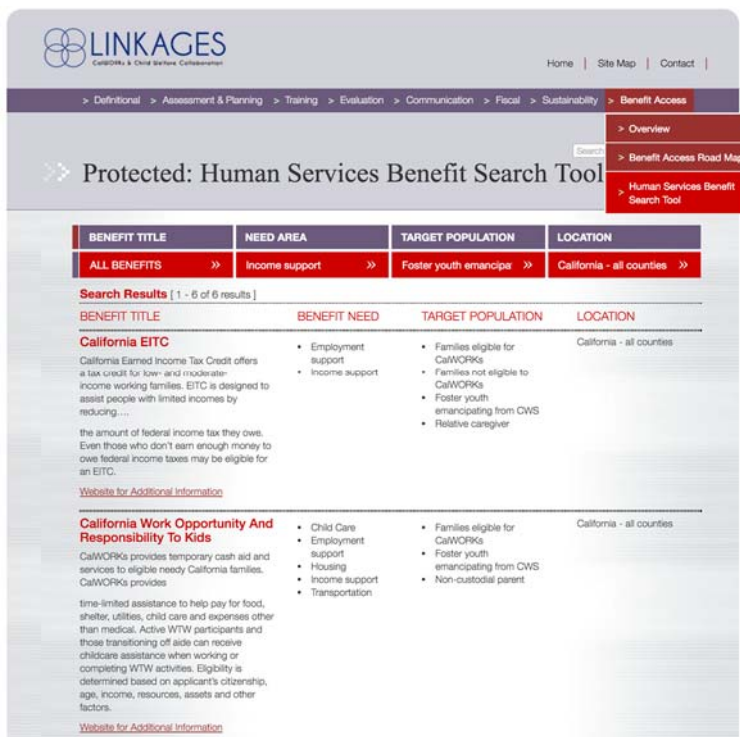
Expanding Linkages' Reach

Con't from Pg. 7

Human Services Benefit Search Tool

The Benefit Access Advisory Workgroup scanned the state for public benefits that serve vulnerable families. We organized this list into 7 need areas and identified 6 target populations.

Need Area	Target Population
Child Care	Families eligible for CalWORKs
Employment	
Health	Families not eligible for CalWORKs
Housing	
Income	Foster youth emancipating from CWS
Nutrition	Noncustodial parent
Transporta-	Relative caregiver Undocumented parent



By using the [Search Tool](#), you can learn details about what is being offered through statewide public benefits. You'll see a description of the benefit, which need areas it addresses and which populations are eligible. Then to confirm all of this and learn more, you can go directly to the benefit's home on the internet with the link provided. For example, did you know that many working parents, whether or not they're in CalWORKs, are eligible for the California Earned Income Tax Credit? Your county could develop a Benefit Access strategy around identifying families who might be eligible and helping them with the paperwork at tax time.

Interested in keeping a printed copy of the whole list of benefits at your desk? Look at the bottom of the search tool page for a printable inventory.

The Opportunities Ahead

We're approaching the end of the fiscal year. As you look ahead to 2016-17 and plan new directions for your Linkages programming, consider developing a Benefit Access strategy. We'll be looking for more examples to add to the Toolkit in the coming months and will put the call out for new strategies that create a simple and effective way to reach vulnerable families.

Upcoming Events Schedule

Linkages Annual Convening,
Queen Mary - Long Beach
REGISTER NOW!

May 3 –4, 2016

CalWORKs Strategic Initiative Webinar:

Date TBD

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The Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC) is a private non-profit organization incorporated in 2004 as a 501 (c) 3 entity under the auspices of the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA). The purpose of the CFPIC is to

advance the development of sound public policy and promote program excellence in county Human Services Agencies through research, education, training and technical assistance.

Linkages is a strategic effort by California to improve outcomes for vulnerable families being served by Child Welfare and the Human Services Benefit programs through development of system change efforts to improve collaborative case management and benefit access practices at the local level. The collaboration is supported through the Linkages Toolkit, convenings, peer support and technical assistance. These supports build on the work under the previous Federal Demonstration grant and the California Department of Social Services, Office of Child Abuse Prevention grant and now funded through a cooperative agreement with CWDA on behalf of the 58 California counties.



CWDA