SECTION 2: county self-AssessmenT

***Purpose.***The county self-assessment (Exhibit 2) is designed to guide county administrators and managers in a reflective exercise about their current CalWORKs implementation. The self-assessment focuses on five areas: (1) program approach, (2) program environment, (3) administration and staffing, (4) service delivery process, and (5) performance management. By completing the self-assessment, counties will gain an understanding of how their current implementation aligns with the CalWORKs 2.0 vision. This assessment can help counties decide where there is interest in making changes to better align with that vision.

***People involved.***County program administrators and managers should complete the self-assessment, using input from supervisors and other staff as needed. One person can coordinate soliciting feedback from all sources and compiling it, or copies of the self-assessment could be distributed to multiple people with one person tallying the results.

***How to complete the assessment.***In each of the five focus areas, the first column of the self-assessment lists components that are aligned with the CalWORKs 2.0 vision. The remaining columns contain space for checkmarks to capture the extent to which the county’s approach is consistent with each:

* **In Place:** The component exists and is concretely observable and/or measurable.
* **Partially in Place:** The component has been partially established, the component has been conceptualized but not fully used, or the component exists, but is not being utilized on a regular basis. This is further broken into three subcategories to capture the extent of implementation.
* **Not in Place:** The component does not exist or has not yet been initiated. This is further broken into three subcategories to capture the level of interest in implementing the component.

***How to use the results.***County administrators and program managers can use this tool to identify the areas in which they feel the county is strong and areas where see the most opportunity for improvement. This self-assessment should be viewed as an iterative process. It is not possible to take on everything at once (and usually not wise to do so). Start with one or two priority areas in which you would like to focus improvement efforts and then come back to the assessment once you feel like you have made adequate progress.

Exhibit 2. The County Self-Assessment

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| --- |
| **Instructions:** Add check marks to the column(s) that best represent your current implementation of CalWORKs. |
| * **In place:**
 | Item is part of the system and “evidence” of this component is observable and/or measurable.[[1]](#footnote-1) |
| * **Partially in place:**
 | Part of the component has been established, the component has been conceptualized but not fully used, or the component exists, but is not being utilized on a regular basis. Indicate extent of implementation. |
| * **Not in place:**
 | The component does not exist or has not yet been initiated. Indicate level of interest in implementing the component. |

|  | MARK ONE PER ROW |
| --- | --- |
|  | **IN PLACE** | **PARTIALLY IN PLACE** | **NOT IN PLACE** |
| **Almost fullyin place** | **Partly in place** | **A few steps taken** | **Very interested** | **Somewhat interested** | **Not at all interested** |
| **I. Program approach** |
| 1) Evidence-informed, goal-focused achievement program framework |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| * System design and actions are aligned and framed around explicit achievable goals
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| * Well-defined services are aligned with the characteristics, needs and aspirations of the caseload
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| * Draws upon behavioral science theory and best available research evidence (e.g., self-regulation, executive functioning, behavioral insights, and trauma informed care)
 | 🞏 | 🞏 | 🞏 | 🞏 | 🞏 | 🞏 | 🞏 |
| 2) Institutionalization of program framework |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Clarity and consistency between the program vision, guiding principles, staff expectations, and program outcomes with regard to goal achievement
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| * Recommendations for incorporating the needs of TANF youth and children into service delivery
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| 3) Strength based, family-focused approach |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Staff recognizes and builds on client strengths
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| * Administrators and staff believe in clients’ inherent ability to succeed
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| * Program provides services and supports that benefit the family unit, including children
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| 4) Well-defined, customized service approach |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Program mission, core values, and program framework encourage and support setting and achieving goals
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| * Client and staff collaborate to customize services for each client and family
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| * Program embraces a culture and practice of equal input from both clients and staff in planning
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| **II. Program environment** |
| 1) Clear, positive, action-oriented program messaging |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Program materials, including letters and notices, are clear, simple, encouraging, and action-oriented
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| * Information is relevant and accessible in multiple formats
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| 2) Accessible, inviting, and family-friendly physical space |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Waiting rooms include positive messaging about the program and are clean, well-decorated, and child friendly
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| * Front desk staff are visible, face clients and welcome all clients immediately upon entry with a friendly and approachable tone
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| * Security and other personnel are held to the same expectations as agency staff (unconditional positive regard for clients, inclusive and culturally sensitive, respectful, adherence to program mission and core values, etc.)
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| 3) Professional customer service approach |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Wait times in the lobby and on the telephone are short
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| * Clients flow easily through the application process
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| * Client needs are resolved within one worker when possible; otherwise hand-offs between workers are efficient and friendly
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| * Program minimizes need for clients to repeat their circumstances to multiple workers
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| **III. Administrative infrastructure and program staffing** |
| 1. Well-defined list of core competencies to guide hiring and development of staff |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Staff believe in the parent’s ability and potential to accomplish his or her goals
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| * Staff are collaborative rather than directive
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| * Staff hold clients accountable for making progress
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| * Staff have unconditional positive regard for the client
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| 2) Inclusive, culturally sensitive staff |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Staff work effectively with diverse populations (e.g., inclusion-focused, culturally inclusive language)
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| * Staff are aware of and manage their cultural biases and judgements toward low-income parents
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| 3) Staff training and development |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| * The agency has developed clear job descriptions and expectations for staff
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| * Staff are provided training and tools to support desired job performance
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| * Staff performance measures map to overall program outcomes and core competencies
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| * Management and supervisors create and support a healthy peer-to-peer coaching environment among staff
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| 4) Knowledge of policies, state initiatives, and community resources  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Program managers and supervisors clearly communicate how staff can use all the policies, specialized services, and supports offered through CalWORKs
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| * Program managers and supervisors clearly communicate how staff can help clients achieve federally defined work activities within a goal achievement framework
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| * Staff are provided training and tools to simplify the process of helping clients access all available services and supports
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| * Staff are provided up-to-date information about community resources available to CalWORKs families
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| * Staff are provided a clear process and tools for timely, accurate tracking of the 24- and 48-month time clocks
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| 5) Approach of contracted service providers and community partners  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Contracted service providers and community partners who work with CalWORKs families have received training and support on client goal-setting
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| * The expectations and performance measures for contracted service providers and community partners who work with CalWORKs families are clearly defined and support client goal achievement
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| * Performance-based contracts reward clients’ progress toward and achievement of goals
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| **IV. Service delivery process (case flow)** |
| 1) Clear, simple, and engaging orientation |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Orientation generates enthusiasm about the program and introduces goal achievement and family focus
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| * Orientation includes relevant, accessible, and useful information and does not flood the client with too much information)
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| * Participants understand the options available to them under CalWORKs and the initial steps they need to take to exercise those options
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| 2) Initial and ongoing assessment of skills, abilities, and service needs |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Initial assessment is used to identify client strengths and needs and create an individualized service plan
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| * Initial assessment process is used to inform client goal setting
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| * Ongoing assessment process includes reviewing and revising client goals and updating client strengths and needs
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| 3) Clear, user-friendly, adaptable goal achievement process  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Goal-setting and achievement are embedded into all aspects of the program, including individual sessions with clients, group job search, and early engagement initiatives including Family Stabilization and Enhanced Subsidized Employment
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| * Goals are meaningful to the clients and reflect their interests and abilities
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| * Goals have a short time horizon with practical, specific, concrete, and sequential steps for achieving them
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| * Staff use short-term and intermediate steps to monitor and track client goal progress
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| * Staff are skilled at identifying and troubleshooting potential challenges that interfere with goal achievement
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| * Staff meet regularly and frequently with clients to review and revise their goals
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| * Staff are encouraging and supportive of goal achievement
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| * Staff have knowledge of internal and community resources and strategize with clients about how to access them
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| 4) Accountability  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Accountability measures for staff and clients are clearly defined and tied to progress toward goals
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| * Staff troubleshoot with clients who are not making progress toward their goals
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| **V. Performance management and measures** |
| * Relevant and appropriate short-, intermediate-, and long-term measures for tracking goal progress and achievement are in place
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| * Outcome targets are clearly defined and map to the expectations for the agency and contracted service providers
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| * Clear and useful process for administrators, supervisors, and direct service staff to use performance management data
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1. Adapted from Blasé, Karen, Melissa van Dyke, and Dean Fixsen (2013). Implementation Drivers: Assessing Best Practices. National Implementation Research Network. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)