

Welfare-to-Work: How It Works

What is Welfare-to-Work?

- ❖ Adults in CalWORKs must do “work activities” to get cash aid. This is called “Welfare-to-Work” (WTW). Unless you have an “exemption” (excusing you from work), one adult on aid must do 30 hours of work per week (20 hours if you have a child under age 6); two parents must do 35 hours per week.
- ❖ You can get training and services to help you earn enough to get off welfare.

Orientation and Appraisal

The WTW “orientation” tells you about the rules. The county next does an “appraisal” to see:

- ❖ If you should be excused from Welfare-to-Work.
- ❖ Ask if you need services like child care and transportation to do the work program.

The appraisal is often at the same time as the orientation. The appraisal is done using a computer program called OCAT. The appraisal will probably take 3-4 hours. The appraisal does not include screening for learning disabilities. Tell the county if you want to be screened for learning disabilities.

Job Search

After appraisal you will be sent to job search for up to four weeks.

- ❖ You don't have to do job search if it conflicts with your job or county-approved schooling.
- ❖ You can ask to skip job search if it will not be useful for you. *Ask to see the county policy on this.*
- ❖ The county can make job search longer or shorter than 4 weeks. *Ask your worker if you want this.*
- ❖ If the county won't let you shorten or skip job search, *ask for a fair hearing* to review the county's decision!

Assessment

Next, the county does an “assessment” of your education and work experience. It uses this information to make your Welfare-to-Work plan.

If the county thinks you have a learning, physical, or mental impairment, or if you ask for a disability review, the county must refer you to a specialist. The specialist will try to find out if you have a condition that prevents you from doing a WTW program or if there are services that can help you.

The Welfare-to-Work Plan

The Welfare-to-Work plan lists what you will do to get the skills you need to go from welfare to work. You and the county are supposed to jointly develop the plan. The plan also lists the services you will get to do your plan. (See the “Support Services” fact sheet for more details.)

Disagree with the Assessment plan?

Ask in writing for a “Third-Party Assessment.” A “non-county” person, someone who does not work for the county, will review your needs and create a plan. *Ask for a state fair hearing if you do not get what you want.*

Reappraisal

Finished your welfare-to-work plan, but do not have a 20-30-35 hour job? The county will do a “reappraisal” of your skills and needs. If needed, you should get more work activities.

Getting a good plan...

- ❖ Ask questions. Negotiate the terms of the plan.
- ❖ Bring a friend or advocate to help you review the contract.
- ❖ Don't agree to a plan that you know you won't be able to do.

If your plan is bad...

- ❖ You have three working days to ask for changes. Call right away, and follow up **in writing!**
- ❖ You have 30 days from starting your plan to ask for a new assignment.
- ❖ Ask for a new plan if your situation changes, such that you cannot do your plan.

- ❖ If the County won't change your plan, ask for a Third-Party Assessment. A non-county person will review your assessment and plan.

Community Service Time

Not getting useful skills from your unpaid work? Ask for a new assignment, or challenge your plan.

IF YOU NEED LEGAL HELP, CONTACT LEGAL SERVICES OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA