

# KEEPING LINKED



## We'll See You in Sacramento!

### Linkages Upstream: Applying the Prevention Framework

We are so excited about this year's Linkages Convening (April 23, 24, 25) in Sacramento that includes a Keynote address by **Sabrina Forte, Office of Equity, CDSS**, on Race, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (REDI) and how Linkages 2.0 is a strategy to reduce disparities by addressing poverty through supports and services early in the experiences of at-risk families. We will also learn about the relationship of Linkages 2.0 and the Protective Factors Framework in a Day 2 General Session presented by **Cailin O'Connor from the Center for the Study of Social Policy** (and she will also host a workshop later that day to provide an opportunity for participants to take a deeper dive into the topic and consider how their strategies address these factors). On our last day, we will hear from **Richard Spiegelman** about research that he has conducted on the risks faced by families in the Child-Only CalWORKs caseload and there will be time to reflect on what strategies the Linkages 2.0 project might consider implementing for these families.

In addition to these general sessions we will have 14 workshops on a variety of topics, including the following: Coordinated Case Planning; Linkages and Prevention (PEI), FAST (see article in this newsletter), Linkages Training Curriculum, and Sub-Committee Updates (Transitional Age Youth, Evaluation, PEI), REDI, Protective Factors, and AB 135 implementation. We want to give a big shout-out to **Riverside, Orange, Yolo, Mariposa, Kern, Ventura and Santa Barbara** who have stepped up to share their experiences in several of the workshops.

Orange county has graciously agreed to video a "success story" featuring a family served by their Linkages Mutual Family unit. We also will use this time to feature counties' "What's in It for Me" or "Why Linkages" brief videos (30 seconds) from staff at different levels and families served by

## What's in this Issue:

- Convening 2024
- Success Story: Kern
- Equitable Outcomes Toolkit
- CalPrevents
- Compassion Fatigue
- New Brochure
- Updates
- Upcoming Events



Linkages. We will be asking Linkages Coordinators if they can create videos using their Smart Phones and send to CFPIC. More to come on this so look for an email later in the month from Mia Stizzo, Communication Specialist for CFPIC, on guidance on the video and how to send to her.

And last, but not least, there will be time to meet with your peers at the Networking Reception on the first night and throughout the convening.

Registration will be in your email later this month. In the meantime, use the [Save The Date](#) to reserve your hotel room at the Doubletree Hotel in Sacramento.

---

## Housing Support Coordination in Kern County: Is it Really That Easy?!

The gold standard for Linkages is the coordination of services and supports provided by both CalWORKs and Child Welfare and Kern County has taken their coordination a step further to include a coordinated approach to housing supports. Since implementing their new program, Kern's Child Welfare Bringing Families Home Program has had a 62% increase in enrollments and a 176% increase in families housed and the county is able to leverage resources from all eligible homelessness programs to better serve families in need and spend down their program allocations.



What does this coordination look like in Kern? The DHS Housing Support Unit (HSU) has a simple and streamlined referral process for Child Welfare staff (just 1 email!) and once families are referred, they are assessed for eligibility for all housing support programs. The program can also identify and serve families without a referral - the HSU utilizes data-driven resources to identify potentially eligible families already receiving services through DHS without requiring a referral from staff. Once the HSU becomes involved, they use a trauma informed and Housing First approach with screening procedures that prioritize referrals based on vulnerabilities and needs while establishing eligibility for other available programs and leveraging any other relevant resources. Through the HSU, DHS families now have direct access to required assessment and enrollment into the Homeless Collaborative's Coordinated Entry System to identify

additional homelessness resources to help stabilize housing. A key feature of the program in Kern is their internal Housing and Homelessness Collaborative consisting of supervisors and managers from various departments within DHS. They are also an active member of the Bakersfield Kern Regional Homeless Collaborative and partner with nonprofits and other county agencies which helps them identify and provide additional supports.

So according to Kern, "it really is that easy!" They implemented on January 3, 2023, after only a few months of planning and the HSU has received over 2,300 referrals for housing assistance in just the first year!

What is the experience like for a family? The timeframe for the family varies, but can range from days to months depending on enrollment and needs. And the service coordination can make a huge difference! Adolpho and his wife Heather had a referral submitted to the Housing Support Unit as they were staying with a family member and at risk of being homeless. The family was participating in Family Reunification and approved for the Bringing Families Home Program. They were able to obtain employment while house searching with the help of a Housing Navigator. They moved into a 2-bedroom single-family townhome and were able to have their children returned and entered into the Family Maintenance program. In August 2023 they were able to exit the BFH program as they were stable and able to pay their rent without assistance.

This definitely the gold standard – outcomes for the family, child welfare and CalWORKs programs.

*Information for this article was submitted by Jeff Oxford, Assistant Program Director, Employment Services and Housing Support Unit, Kern County*

---

## Toolkit to Impact Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare

Check out this resource from Chapin Hall and Lutheran Services of America (LSA)! The video linked below provides an overview of the Family Stabilization Initiative (FSI) and demonstrates how centering issues of race equity can lead to sustainable and impactful interventions that are responsive to the needs of marginalized communities. The FSI used evidence-based interventions to dismantle racial disparities in child welfare and promote child maltreatment prevention. Through development and implementation of the FSI, the team at LSA and Chapin Hall gained an understanding of how their use of a race equity lens improved services to families while also increasing the sustainability of their program. Seeing the success of their efforts, they developed a toolkit to share their ideas and tools for collaborating with community partners to prevent child maltreatment, promote self-sufficiency, and increase sustainability.

Through the work of the FSI, the teams at Chapin Hall and LSA identified 4 guiding principles for advancing race equity. These principles are not unique to the FSI, but can be useful in any program development or implementation project:

- Directly address racial disparities
- Change organizational culture and practices
- Uplift voices with lived experience
- Mobilize community assets



The teams also identified 6 key components of sustainability:

- Leadership capacity for change management
- Program fidelity
- Effective staffing
- Community engagement
- Effective family referrals
- Financial investments

Together, these guiding principles and key components drive program success and sustainability while serving to increase equity in social service programs, things Linkages teams are already thinking about across California as we build capacity for primary and secondary prevention in Linkages 2.0. You can find the video [here](#) and the toolkit is available online [here](#).

---

## Join the Prevention Online Community of Practice at CalPrevents



The Office of Child Abuse and Prevention (OCAP) and Casey Family Programs have developed **CalPrevents**, an online community of practice that connects all of us working to build child, family, and community well-being in California.

Through CalPrevents, you can connect with others working in prevention across California and engage in dialogue to generate peer-to-peer learning, find solutions to common problems, uncover best practices, and build new understanding and insights. You can share and discover a wide range of helpful resources to enhance your prevention efforts and drive positive, strategic advancements in your work.

[Follow this link to join and explore CalPrevents!](#)

## Empathetic Strain & Secondary Trauma Self Assessment and Interventions

As we support each other and families within the CalWORKs and Child Welfare systems through Linkages 2.0, our capacity for compassion and empathy is in constant overdrive. While we came to these careers hoping to make change and help others, the impact of the traumatic events families share with us can have a real impact on us as we take on the story or the energy of those we assist. As practitioners, supervisors and managers, we need tools to address empathic strain, burnout and compassion fatigue within ourselves and organizationally. The Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL) Measure and Manual can help you be more aware of your personal risk factors for empathic strain & secondary traumatic stress and can

help you employ strategies to reduce the impact of trauma exposure. Start by visiting [www.proqol.org](http://www.proqol.org) to take quick 30 question self assessment to see your own results in Compassion Satisfaction, Burnout, and Secondary

Traumatic Stress, then check out the resources and tools in the [self-care tools section of the website](#). The better we are, the better we can continue to help others!







# New Year, New Brochure!

We are excited to share an updated version of the [Linkages Brochure](#)! This brochure captures the new spirit of Linkages 2.0 with a focus on prevention and early intervention. It also includes our Linkages 2.0 logo. Interested in a customizable version for your county? Email Andrea Lewis at [andrea.lewis@cfpic.org](mailto:andrea.lewis@cfpic.org).

## Updates

### FAST-LC

As we reported in the Fall 2023 Newsletter, California is participating in a national learning collaborative for states and Tribes seeking to use innovative partnership strategies between CalWORKs/TANF, Tribal TANF and Child Welfare programs to mitigate and reduce families' involvement with the child welfare system. Known as the FAST-LC (Families are Stronger Together - Learning Collaborative), the 12-month initiative extends from September 2023 through September 2024.

Representatives from CDSS and CFPIC have joined information sharing and training events with teams from Arizona, Arkansas, the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boys Reservation (Montana), Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Oregon, the Pascua Yaqui Tribe (Arizona); and West Virginia.

So far, we are learning from other states and Tribes about screening tools to support primary prevention efforts, managing the challenges related to patchwork data systems and state-tribal TANF data system interaction, and efforts to narrow the definition of abuse and neglect. We hope to learn more from Michigan about how their co-enrollment coordinator engages with schools and other prevention partners and from Oregon about their program that connects families receiving TANF to prevention services in the community.

Through the FAST-LC we are also building stronger connections between CalWORKs and Child Welfare teams at the state level and seeking ways to engage with people with lived experience in both systems and Tribal partners to facilitate a continuous feedback process across all partners.

Do you have ideas for the FAST-LC team to consider or connections to people with lived experience who might be interested in speaking to us to inform our work? If so, please reach out to Melissa at [melissa.connelly@cfpic.org](mailto:melissa.connelly@cfpic.org).



## Prevention & Early Intervention (PEI) Subcommittee

The Linkages PEI Subcommittee continues to move forward in working to bring the Linkages approach to families who have not formally entered the Child Welfare system but who would benefit from supportive services.

The Primary Prevention approach that the Subcommittee has been developing has been the production of a "Protective Factors Brochure" that counties will be able to adapt to include resources in their own communities, arranged according to how the resources address one of the five Protective Factors. The design of the brochure has been completed and an All County Information Notice has been drafted for processing through the normal channels at CDSS; we are hoping that the ACIN and Brochure distribution can be accomplished before the 2024 Linkages Convening so that we can showcase it there.

The Secondary Prevention approach has not been as successful. We have mapped the flow of families through both systems (CWS and CalWORKs) and have identified where we believe an initial screening of families in the CalWORKs system might be activated in order to help guide families to the Community Pathways agencies that counties' Family First Prevention Services (FFPS) plans will be supporting. However, we have not been successful in determining how we might identify or develop a screening tool or where exactly such a tool might be employed.

An alternative approach to the development of a screening tool is being explored by reviewing research on the [CFPIC website](#) that highlights the risks faced by families with CalWORKs Child Only cases (there will be a presentation of this research at the 2024 convening). At its next meeting, the Subcommittee will begin working on how this research information might inform a productive approach to Secondary Prevention in the Linkages program.

Anyone interested in joining the work of the committee can contact Stuart Oppenheim: [stuart.oppenheim@cfpic.org](mailto:stuart.oppenheim@cfpic.org)



## County Evaluation Subcommittee

RDA Consulting and CFPIC continue to meet with Orange, Riverside and Sonoma counties to develop tools and support the County Linkages evaluation. The team has developed the following data collection tools: Key Informant Interviews (KII), Focus Groups with Line Staff, Family Survey and a Case Review Tool. RDA Consulting completed KIIs with county leadership and focus groups with key line staff to learn about the implementation of Linkages at each county site. The evaluation counties are working to gather releases of information from families served by Linkages and will be sending a family survey to obtain the family's perspective and give voice to those we serve. A gift card incentive will be provided to respondents. The Case Review Tool is being developed in partnership with the evaluation counties to assess the level of coordination and dosage of services received by Linkages families. The team will provide more information and share tools at the Evaluation Workshop at the upcoming convening (see Linkages Upstream article).

## Linkages Transition Age Youth (TAY) Subcommittee Update

The Linkages focus on transition age youth is a new strategy in the Linkages 2.0 initiative that brings primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention approaches to a specifically vulnerable population - youth transitioning to adulthood. The Linkages TAY Subcommittee is working to develop practice guidance about prevention services for transitional age youth and non-minor dependent young adults with a focus on key areas identified by the CWDA TAY Subcommittee:

- Improving future economic stability and access to **income and food security** supports through programs such as WIC, CalWORKs and CalFresh
- Improving access to **housing** supports for young adults exiting foster care
- Improving future access to **healthcare**
- Increasing **social connections** within the community including access to FRCs, parent support groups, and other community-based supports
- Connecting pregnant and parenting young adults to **childcare** and other services that support expecting and new parents
- Improving access to **behavioral health and SUD** services for young adults after they leave the foster care system
- Supporting **educational access** for young adults exiting foster care

For the past year, we have been gathering best practices and we are now drafting guidance material for county CalWORKs and CWS programs who want to provide Linkages coordinated support for transition age youth as they exit foster care. By working together to support youth exiting care, Linkages teams can provide information and services to help young adults have sustained economic stability and avoid future involvement with the Child Welfare system as a parent.

As a next step, we will be sending a survey to counties to make sure we have all the latest information about your best practices for coordinating services for transition age youth - we look forward to hearing from you!

If you are interested in joining the TAY Subcommittee, please reach out to Melissa Connelly or Andrea Lewis!



## Let's Get Together: Upcoming Events

### Linkages TA/Guidance Calls

- [Click here](#) to schedule a call with the CFPIC Linkages team to promote Linkages efforts in your county.

### Annual Convening

- April 23–25, 2024, Doubletree by Hilton, Sacramento CA



**Danna Fabella**  
Linkages Project Director  
[danna.fabella@cfpic.org](mailto:danna.fabella@cfpic.org)



**Melissa Connelly**  
Associate Director  
[melissa.connelly@cfpic.org](mailto:melissa.connelly@cfpic.org)



**Andrea Lewis**  
Linkages Project Associate  
[andrea.lewis@cfpic.org](mailto:andrea.lewis@cfpic.org)