

**CalWORKs Work Participation Fact Sheet**  
**July 1, 2009**

- **Most adults in the CalWORKs program are participating.**
  - 50% of work-required families have employment earnings.
  - 65% of work-required adults are participating.
- **The federal WPR is a flawed measure that does not reflect client participation or program success.** Among its many flaws:
  - **WPR excludes part-time work, and ignores the reality of low-wage jobs.** The WPR is an “all or nothing” measure that does not give any credit for partial participation. Many clients work part-time, and have little control over work hours and schedules. They may not get enough hours to consistently meet WPR every month.
  - **WPR is only a point-in-time measurement; viewing participation over time shows the overwhelming majority of clients are engaged.** Just because a client is not participating in a given month does not mean they are disengaged; that client could be employed the very next month. For example, over a nine-month period Riverside County found 87 percent of clients participated.
- **California is doing about as well as other states on the WPR; in fact, half of the states are not meeting federal WPR requirements.** Our WPR was 22 percent in 2007; although the federal government has not released figures for other states, we understand that half of the states did not meet the WPR requirements. We also understand that our rate is close to the national average, and similar to other large states such as Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, and Washington.
- **The Administration has repeatedly and consistently acknowledged the WPR is a flawed measure.** More specifically, the Administration characterized the current federal scheme as “setting up a system that ... encourages states to adopt harsh restrictions on eligibility or to create solely state funded programs in order to remove families from the federally counted caseload who cannot possibly meet federal participation standards. We believe that this should not be the intention of welfare ‘reform.’”
- **The Governor contradicts himself when he acknowledges the poor economy is driving CalWORKs caseload up, but also says CalWORKs cuts are needed to balance the state’s budget.**
  - **In this severe recession with sky-high unemployment, CalWORKs grants and employment services are needed now more than ever.** Many families who have never before applied for assistance are unemployed and

- applying for CalWORKs. Just when the services are most needed is exactly the wrong time to scale back the program.
- **The federal government supports efforts to maintain grants and services.** ARRA provides significant incentives to states to keep families on the program, and acknowledges the WPR requirements should be adjusted in the current economy.
  - **CalWORKs provides \$7.1 billion in badly-needed economic stimulus for the state.** A recent study by Beacon Economics found that \$1 in state spending on CalWORKs generates \$7.35 in economic output. CalWORKs generates a total of \$7.1 billion in economic output, 137,000 jobs, and \$130 million in sales tax revenues.
- **The Administration has acknowledged the success of the CalWORKs program and that the WPR does not reflect the significant accomplishments of the program.**
    - **As recently as September 2008, the Administration noted the “successful efforts that have moved over 400,000 cases beyond public assistance in California since 1996.”**
    - **CalWORKs is a successful policy model for increasing work and self-sufficiency, while maintaining a safety-net for low-income children.** Over 400,000 families across the state (almost half the caseload) have left aid and become self-sufficient since welfare reform began in 1997. In addition, more adults on aid are working, and they are earning more under CalWORKs.
    - **Welfare reform has transformed CalWORKs to a temporary assistance program, where the average time on aid is less than two years.**