

GAIN: THE BRIDGE TO INDEPENDENCE

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110 INTRODUCTION

The GAIN program provides employment-related services to CalWORKs participants to help them find employment, stay employed, and move to higher paying jobs which lead to self-sufficiency and independence.

This Chapter describes the participant flow from Appraisal through activities which lead to full-time employment. After Appraisal, the participant continues through the GAIN flow to Job Club Services and, if the participant remains unemployed or under employed (i.e., not working 32/35 hours per week) he/she attends a vocational assessment for the development of an employment plan. The plan may include one or more of the following services: education, training, job search, transitional subsidized employment, mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment and/or domestic violence counseling, as specified by the assessor in the vocational assessment plan.

111 KEY POINTS

- Participants coming to GAIN for the first time or returning to GAIN after a 12 month lapse are to participate in Orientation.
- To supplement clinical assessment, vocational assessments include screening for any barriers to employment caused by problems with domestic violence, mental health, and/or substance abuse.
- Mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, domestic violence services and learning disability accommodations are available to participants to assist them in overcoming barriers to employment.
- Post-Employment Services (PES) assist persons working full-time (32/35 hours or more) to advance from a job to a better job and then a career.
- GAIN Services Workers (GSWs), Contracted Case Managers (CCMs) and Refugee Employment Program (REP) Case Managers (RCMs) shall update the GEARS system within one workday of a case activity occurring for which data is tracked on GEARS.
- Post-Time Limit (PTL) services are offered to adult participants who have exhausted their 48-month time limit of CalWORKs assistance.
- The 48-month clock continues to run for participants with exemption codes 08, 09, 11, 12 and for participants tracked with employment tracking codes [10](#) and [13](#), receiving \$10 or more in monthly cash aid. ([See WtW Participation Exemptions](#))
- Exemption codes 01, 02, 04, 05, 06, 07, 14, 20, 21 and 22 stop the 48-month clock. ([See Age-Related Exemptions and 48-Month Clock Stopper Exemption](#))

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- State regulations allow for a past or present victim of domestic violence, which impacts or impairs the adult’s ability to participate or progress in employment or a county-approved Welfare-To-Work (WTW) Plan, to be eligible for a clock-stopper and/or extender, depending on when the situation occurs.
- GAIN participants receive an appointment to meet their GSW 15 days prior to completion of their Self-Initiated Program (SIP) or post-assessment activities.

112 **ELIGIBILITY**

Participation in GAIN is mandatory for all CalWORKs participants unless exempt.

- .1 Exemptions require documentation, verification, and approval of a GSW.
- .2 Exempt participants may volunteer to participate in GAIN program services. Exempt participants are not subject to the 20-hour core activity, nor the 32/35 hours per week participation requirement rules ([see Exemption Guidelines, Responsibilities and Records Retention, Section 412.5](#)).

113 **APPRAISAL**

After registration, participants are scheduled to attend a one-hour Appraisal appointment to learn information about program features, participation requirements, specialized supportive services, and sign contracts. Prior to the Appraisal appointment, the GSW calls the participant to discuss the need to have child care arrangements in order to start Orientation/Job Club/Vocational Assessment (JCO), on the Monday following the Appraisal appointment.

.1 **Appraisal Interview**

The GSW conducts a thorough interview with the participant to determine the following:

- .11 If the participant qualifies for an exemption;
- .12 If the participant is enrolled in a Self-Initiated Program;
- .13 Identify the preliminary employment goal through the individual's work, education, and welfare history;
- .14 If the participant has a need for supportive services that may be a barrier to employment;
- .15 If the participant needs clinical assessment or Domestic Violence Services;
- .16 If the participant has a potential Learning Disability; and
- .17 Should the participant be designated as a “dual track” candidate; or

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.18 If the participant needs a referral for Expungement Services.

Note: Expungement Services are a voluntary service for participants with past criminal records to have the opportunity to “set aside and dismiss,” but not seal, convictions. This service is offered throughout the lifetime of receipt of CalWORKs.

114 **ORIENTATION/MOTIVATION**

Orientation/motivational training is the first activity of Orientation/Job Club/Vocational Assessment and is conducted in a group setting by the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE). Motivational sessions are presented in group settings for English, Spanish, Armenian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, Tagalog, Russian and Cambodian-speaking participants. The LACOE presenter provides an overview of the GAIN program along with the participant’s rights and responsibilities. Orientation can be assigned as a stand alone activity if the participant does not need to attend Job Club.

The purpose of motivational training is to raise participants’ self-esteem, identify existing transferable work-related skills, learn the concept of “it pays to work”, and gain the confidence to perform in the local labor market.

All participants are required to attend motivational training except participants who meet an exemption criteria and wish to be excused from participation, self-declare a substance abuse, mental health or domestic violence problem, or they are in an approved SIP, or employed and cannot miss school/work to attend a full-day motivational program. Participants meeting an exception, are still encouraged to attend the Orientation, if at all possible, in order to learn more about the services offered in GAIN.

Upon completion of Orientation, participants are eligible for a \$25 gift certificate drawing which is administered by LACOE.

115 **ORIENTATION/JOB CLUB/VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT**

The Los Angeles County GAIN Program provides a four-week Job Readiness & Career Planning Services Program, known as Orientation/Job Club/Vocational Assessment (JCO). This assists participants with job preparation, job search and if appropriate, enrollment in an educational/training program with the ultimate goal of obtaining, securing, and/or promoting, to employment at a living wage.

- .1 JCO consists of a one-week Job Preparation and Planning Seminar to develop a Career Goal Plan as an employment guide and a three-week job search activity. ([See Section-118 Vocational Assessment](#)). Orientation is conducted on day one followed by Job Club on day two.
- .2 During the first week the participant learns about work behaviors and attitudes, employer expectations, participation, dress codes, earnings disregards, and the working parents’ budget, goal setting progress, etc. The participant also learns how to prepare an effective resume for job searches and completes

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extensive interview preparation administered by job club staff.

- .3 During the second week of JCO, the job search is focused on targeted jobs with a living wage. Job search in the third week is focused on targeted occupations that have documented potential for growth that will lead to a living wage. The fourth week is concentrated on identifying and enrolling participants in an educational/training activity to be combined with part-time employment.

116 **SELF-INITIATED PROGRAM (SIP)**

A SIP is a vocational education/training program in which a CalWORKs participant was enrolled prior to his/her GAIN Appraisal appointment date. The participant may continue in the program as a Welfare-to-Work activity, when the program is for an undergraduate degree or certificate program that leads to employment or a post-baccalaureate degree program for a California teaching credential and the participant is making satisfactory progress.

- .1 The participant must be participating in the SIP and/or related activities such as lab and [Work Study](#) (for a combined total of 32/35 hours per week) or be required to participate concurrently in Flex Job Club, Supervised Job Search or another Welfare-to-Work activity to meet the weekly participation requirement.

117 **LEARNING DISABILITY**

The Learning Disability (LD) program improves services to GAIN participants who may have hidden disabilities that prevent him/her from obtaining and/or retaining a job. The program offers a screening for LD, and LD evaluation, and reasonable accommodations to assist the participant with participation in GAIN activities. Participants with a verified LD are provided with written documentation of accommodations needed to perform effectively in the classroom and/or on the job competitively, with classmates and/or co-workers. ([See Chapter 1200, Section 1280](#))

118 **VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT**

The JCO Team, composed of a JCO GSW, Job Club Facilitator, the Vocational Assessor and a GAIN Business Services Specialist, meet on Friday of the third week of targeted job search to discuss and review each participant's case in order to begin developing the foundation for a personalized employment plan prior to vocational assessment.

If the participant does not obtain full-time employment by Friday of the 3rd week of Job Club services, he/she is referred directly to Vocational Assessment.

- .1 The participant's employment plan is developed by the assessor and the GAIN participant using the participant's existing educational level, employment experience, employment goals, and vocational assessment test results. The employment plan will specify the employment goal to be attained under the program, as well as the service(s) needed to achieve the employment goal, including counseling/treatment services to remove barriers caused by mental

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health, substance abuse, or domestic violence problems. The vocational assessment is completed by the third week of the targeted job search.

The JCO team assists in identifying local employment opportunities and educational/training programs for participants, based on the results of their vocational assessment. ([See Chapter 700-Job Club/Vocational Assessment](#)).

119 **WELFARE-TO-WORK PLAN**

The Welfare-to-Work (WtW) plan is developed by the GSW and the participant using the vocational assessment employment plan and/or any clinical assessment. This WtW plan may include Job Search Services, Paid Work Experience, Education/training, Job Skills Training Directly Related to Employment (JST), mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, and/or domestic violence treatment.

- .1 All non-exempt participants are required to sign their initial WtW plan within 90 calendar days of their determination of eligibility for CalWORKs cash aid. The 90 days also apply to participants with expiring exemptions.
- .2 The 90-day period to develop a WtW plan includes time participating in learning disability screenings, medical evaluations (e.g., when a GN6051, verification of GAIN Exemption, is being completed), and third-party assessments.

120 **ACTIVITY REFERRAL**

Once all the initial activities have been negotiated by the participant and the GSW, the participant is referred to the appropriate Welfare-to-Work activity and provided with the appropriate supportive services.

.1 Notification of Next GAIN Activity

The GN 60102-a, GAIN Services Worker Appointment Letter, purpose is to schedule an appointment with the GAIN participant prior to completion of his/her Self-Initiated Program (SIP) or post-assessment activities.

- .11 GEARS automatically sends the GN 60102-a, 30 calendar days prior to the expected end date of the component notifying the participant of an appointment with the GSW/CCM 15 days prior to the expected component end date.

Note: Since the next GAIN activity assignment appointment will be made 15 days prior to the component expected end date, no compliance process needs to be initiated if the participant does not attend his/her appointment.

- .12 If the participant does not attend his/her appointment, the GSW/CCM will send another GN 60102-a to the GAIN participant making a next GAIN activity assignment appointment with him/her on the first workday

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following the component expected end date.

- .13 If the participant does not attend the appointment that was scheduled by the GSW/CCM, and the GSW/CCM has not received and approved an extension request for the GAIN activity, then the compliance process shall be initiated. The GSW first attempts to contact the GAIN participant before initiating the compliance process. Every effort will be made to keep participants on a path of uninterrupted engagement and to avoid compliance procedures.

121 **SUPERVISED JOB SEARCH**

Supervised Job Search (JSR) is for those participants who have completed a four week Job Club/Vocational Assessment Program and WtW plan without obtaining employment. JSR activities are similar to the activities in the second and third week of Job Club.

122 **JOB SKILLS TRAINING DIRECTLY RELATED TO EMPLOYMENT (JST)**

Job Skills Training Directly Related to Employment is a non-core GAIN activity which may be considered as a core activity, if it meets the following criteria:

- .1 The GSW/CCM has determined that the program will lead to self-supporting employment;
- .2 The participant is making satisfactory progress;
- .3 The participant does not have a baccalaureate degree (those who are pursuing a California teaching credential are exempted from this requirement); and
- .4 The program is on the County-approved list of programs that will lead to employment, or the participant demonstrates that completion of the program will lead to employment. If the program is not on the County-approved list, the participant must be given an opportunity to demonstrate that the completion of the program will lead to employment.

JST may be a concurrent activity with [Work Study](#).

123 **WORK EXPERIENCE**

Work Experience (WEX) is a work assignment in which a participant receives non-salaried experience in a public or private nonprofit agency. Work Experience assignments provide training in appropriate work behavior skills, the acquisition of new skills, the enhancement of existing skills or recently acquired skills, and employment references to use when seeking salaried employment.

124 **PAID WORK EXPERIENCE (PWE)**

Paid Work Experience (PWE) is subsidized employment offered to participants

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enrolled in Welfare-to-Work (WtW) programs presented by the Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), One-Stop Work Source Centers and Department of Labor (DOL) WtW grantees. This activity provides occupational training to enable the participant to learn a skill and to qualify for an occupation through demonstration of abilities and practices.

125 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION/TRAINING

Vocational education or training is assigned if the vocational assessment employment plan specifies that vocational education or training is needed to achieve the participant's employment goal. The primary goal for assigning a participant to these services is to improve their existing skills or obtain new skills required to move the participant into full-time employment. Vocational education/training may be a concurrent activity with [Work Study](#).

126 MENTAL HEALTH/SUBSTANCE ABUSE/DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TREATMENT

Specialized Supportive Services (SSS) are offered to participants identified as having a barrier to employment caused by problems with domestic violence, mental health, and/or substance abuse. Additional information related to these supportive services can be found in [Chapter 1200, Sections 1250, 1260 and 1270](#).

127 WORK STUDY (WKS)

Work study provides participants with paid work while pursuing an educational program. To be eligible for a work study assignment, participants must be enrolled in a post-secondary school that participates in a work study program. Work study assignments are available both off and on campus. The work study assignment may be with a private business, a non-profit agency or a public agency. ([See Work Study, Section 612.28](#)).

128 POST-EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Most participants secure initial, entry-level jobs with wages too low to eliminate their need for welfare benefits. Post-employment services are designed to help participants stay employed and attain a better job with sufficient wages to obtain self-sufficiency from CalWORKs dependency.

The goal is to provide participants with the information, resources and tools to retain unsubsidized employment, improve career potential and achieve economic self-sufficiency with a living wage prior to exhausting their 48-month time limit. ([See Chapter 1000-Post Employment Services](#)).

129 48-MONTH TIME LIMIT

With the changes to the CalWORKs program pursuant to Senate Bill 72, which was signed by the Governor on March 24, 2011, effective July 1, 2011, the receipt of cash assistance in California became subject to a 48-month time limit for most adults.

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- .1 All countable months of time-on-aid received in California and/or other states (TANF) since January 1, 1998, count towards the new 48-month time limit.
- .2 GAIN participants can participate in any allowable GAIN activity for the duration of their 48-month CalWORKs time limit, as long as they meet the WtW participation requirements.
- .3 In evaluating an adult's time on aid, an allowance must be made for specific circumstances in which some months on cash aid do not count toward the 48-month time limit. These circumstances are known as Clock Stoppers. Additionally, certain circumstances allow for the receipt of cash aid to be extended beyond the 48-month time limit. These circumstances are known as Extenders. Domestic violence can be both a clock stopper and/or extender depending on case circumstances.

130 **POST-TIME LIMIT SERVICES**

Adult participants who exhaust their 48-month CalWORKs time clock become ineligible for regular GAIN services. Participants who are removed from the CalWORKs Assistance Unit (AU) due to time limits may volunteer for Post-Time Limit (PTL) services. PTL services give participants the opportunity to continue to engage in GAIN activities and access supportive services needed to achieve self-sufficiency. PTL services are available to participants for up to 12 months from the date they are removed from the AU due to time limits. Participants that are granted clock stoppers or extenders are added back to the AU and become eligible for regular GAIN services ([See Chapter 2100](#))

131 **DECISION CHART**

.1 Welfare-to-Work (WtW) GAIN Decision Chart

