

Peer Team Report  
On  
CalWORKs

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## **Area I. CURRICULUM**

N/A

## **Area II. STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT**

### Findings:

Information on CalWORKs programs, admissions policies, graduation requirements, social and academic policies, refund policies, student conduct standards and complaint and grievance policies are available in the college catalog, class schedules, the CalWORKs handbook, the CalWORKs office, through personal interviews with counselors and on the AVC website. State and Federal government publications designed to increase public awareness of CalWORKs services are distributed at the CalWORKs office as well. The office is open and staffed Monday through Friday 8:00am to 4:30pm. Communication with students being served has traditionally been via U.S. Mail. Efforts are ongoing to switch to a more cost-effective email and voice broadcast system.

Student education and job preparation training are major a focus of CalWORKs in transitioning individuals from welfare dependency to self-sufficiency. Collaboration with many other services offered on campus is required and referrals are made for students when they are deemed necessary. Such services include Disabled Student Services, EOPS, GED, Transfer Center, Career Center, Job Placement Center, Student Development and College Activities, Counseling, Student Transition and Retention, Assessment, Cal. Work Opportunities and Responsibilities to Kids, Outreach, Learning Center, Enrollment Services, and Veterans Affairs.

Students who are being assisted through the CalWORKs program complete surveys related to their experiences with the program and its services. Surveys have been favorable, with particular satisfaction being expressed for the counseling and case management services, book requests and work study activities. Student feedback is discussed at weekly meeting to help implement process improvements. A desire for greater attendance and participation at conferences and workshops was expressed by several staff to maintain currency of knowledge of changing regulations.

Presently, 58% of students being served are in Lancaster, 37% live in Palmdale and 5% are in surrounding communities. With almost 40% of students living in the Palmdale area, providing in-person services for Palmdale residents at the Palmdale campus is a major priority since such interviews are needed before any further services can be provided..

Childcare is presently provided for over 1100 CalWORKs students through the AVC CalWORKs Child Care Program. Temporary child care assistance is also provided while CalWORKs cases recommended by the county are being assessed. Documents related to

these services are presently being manually transported from site to site at the expense of the Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) program.

Student records are maintained permanently, securely and confidentially for a minimum period of three years. Back up of all files is required, regardless of the form in which the files are maintained. Some areas of the CalWORKs office are not secure, necessitating movement of information at night into a secured file room. Increasing student numbers bring greater demand for a transition to document imaging to create a cost-effective and space-efficient system.

**Recommendations:**

- Provide services at the Palmdale site.
- Increase document imaging and secure confidential information at the front desk.
- Continue to transition the communication with students to an email-based system in the interests of cost effectiveness and timely communication and use such transmission to communicate with other agencies such as CCRC.
- Continue construction and completion of a fully comprehensive web site.
- Increase conference attendance for full time staff.
- Continue coordination with other service areas on campus to assist CalWORKs students to maintain satisfactory academic progress and an updated educational plan.

### **Area III. PROGRAM AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**Findings:**

CalWORKs has developed a series of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), which are correlated to relevant Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) formulated by the college. Since Fall 2005, the department has used the SLOs consistently in the assessment of the effectiveness of CalWORKs services.

**Recommendations:**

- Continue using SLOs to improve services to students.
- Improve student evaluations and include an online version.

### **Area IV. PERSONNEL AND SUPPORT SERVICES**

**Findings:**

Although the full time to part time staffing ratio appears adequate, this formulation fails to take into account the cyclical demand for CalWORKs services. Multi-semester processing and registration cycles create peak periods of demand for staffing.

Regulations are complex, requiring input from more than one knowledgeable full time staff member. Efficiency is slowed by the lack of staffing, creating increased crowding in an area which is already small. Liaison with other agencies such as CCRC is very time consuming and requires the assistance of student workers.

Recommendations:

- Hire a full time faculty counselor to replace the individual who left this position.
- Hire a CalWORKs Technician II to replace a staff member who left.
- Hire a Clerical Assistant II.
- Hire a Job Developer to increase offerings for this service.
- Hire classified assistance to help staff child care services at both campuses.

## **Area V. FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY**

Findings:

CalWORKs shares space with other campus services in a small area, creating crowding and privacy issues. Until the new Student Services building becomes a reality, more space allocation might involve relocation of CalWORKs to a new area. Large rooms for holding student workshops are greatly needed, since most large rooms are being used for classes. Smaller areas for holding confidential student interviews are also needed for full time and part time counselors. Full time staff are sharing office spaces and have equipment needs that could improve efficiency. The technical analyst is expected to work in a very noisy and crowded environment as well.

Recommendations:

- Review the front counter space and the intake process to increase confidentiality and safety.
- Explore office space options campus wide to seek another venue for an expanded CalWORKs presence.
- Work with ITS to seek better technological methods to enhance efficiency and cost-effectiveness with respect to data acquisition, storage and analysis.
- Reexamine options for large rooms in which to hold student workshops.
- Purchase a fax/copier for the Program coordinator's office due to the sensitive and confidential nature of some of the documents that are presently being transmitted over a shared machine.

## **Area VI. FISCAL SUPPORT**

Findings:

To date, state funding has increased each year since the inception of the CalWORKs program in 2004-5, with \$1,729,267 being received from the Chancellor's Office last

academic year. Today's economic climate is creating increased demand for CalWORKs services in the face of ever-increasing budgetary constraints. The Educational Master Plan (Areas 4 and 5) include a range of personnel positions, facilities and equipment that the CalWORKs office will need in the near future. The current and anticipated budgetary allowances will not support the proposed staff salaries and benefits or equipment costs.

Recommendations:

- Request through the District budget process financial support to help offset the nonCalWORKs students served by the program, particularly in the child care and GED areas.

## **Area VII. COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND PROGRAM AWARENESS**

Findings:

CalWORKs is required by law to interface with county welfare associations to ensure services are provided but not duplicated. CalWORKs also coordinates with a variety of programs working within the AVC environment, including instructional resources and career development associations, listed comprehensively on the first page of this report. It is essential that a single entry point for CalWORKs students be created, presently provided by a case management service approach. Continued close liaison with the county agency GAIN has provided successful community outreach. Other agencies with which liaisons are held include Child Care Resource Center (CCRC), Child Care Connection (CCC), Mexican American Foundation (MAOF), Family Self Sufficiency Program (FSS) and the Department of Education. LAC-5 monthly meetings are attended to ensure that the college and Los Angeles County are working together to meet student needs in compliance with governmental guidelines. A CalWORKs advisory committee meets every spring semester and includes representatives from the AVC staff and students, L.A. County, cities of Lancaster and Palmdale, local business representatives and CCRC.

CalWORKs has designed brochures to be distributed at community events, and coordination continues with the Outreach center. GED brochures have also been developed and are circulated at Outreach events.

Recommendations:

- Create a "Day at AVC" for orientation of county GAIN workers.
- Increase community outreach events.
- Improve coordination with the many organizations involved in providing services to CalWORKs students.

## **Area VIII. STATE AND FEDERAL COMPLIANCE**

### **Findings:**

CalWORKs appears to comply with State and Federal college guidelines.

### **Recommendations:**

- The Peer Team recommends continued diligence in these areas.

## **SUMMARY**

All members of the Peer Team learned a great deal from the self-study regarding the responsibilities and scope of CalWORKs. We were universally impressed by the Center's ambition and effort. It is clear that the need for services provided by CalWORKs is going to increase and funding from the State budget is uncertain. We strongly support the provision of additional staffing assistance to CalWORKs and additional space allocation in light of predictable delays in the construction of the new SSV building. We would also strongly recommend implementation of computer software programs to assist in the creation of coordinated educational plans for CalWORKs students and training in its use for counselors in all college programs to best assist students achieve their goals and to efficiently use all financial resources at hand.