# College of San Mateo

## 2023 2024

## CALWORKS PROGRAM REVIEW

2023-24 Program Review

Program Name: CalWORKs
Program Contact: Patrice Reed-Fort
Academic Year: 2023 - 2024

## 1.*Description of Program (200-400 words)*

*Provide a brief description of the program and how it supports the following:*

- o *CSM Mission and Values Statements*
- o *CSM Statement of Solidarity*
- o *CSM's Strategic Priorities*
- o *SMCCCD's Strategic Goals*
- o *CSM Forward 2028 - Education Master Plan*

California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), is committed to support students on county public assistance as they access vital support through the provision of wrap-around support services.

CalWORKs is a state funded program that specifically aims to support our most hyper-marginalized student population, low income parenting students who are eligible for the state's cash assistance program. Through support such as grants, work-study, job placement, childcare, supplies, parenting and self-development workshops, meal cards, assistance with childcare costs, skills training, community building and more, CalWORKs students are supported financially, academically and socially as they strive to attain their educational goals.

Since its inception in the late 1990s and through its codification by Title 5, CalWORKs has historically and remains today, a program rooted in expanding access, support, and intentional interventions for some of the California Community College's most vulnerable population of students. As CalWORKs not only impacts parenting students but directly impacts their dependent children, CalWORKs programming can have a direct impact in the lives of students that can be felt in a multigenerational manner. Bridges Out of Poverty by Payne, DeVol, and Smith describe a definition of poverty that is more broad than being low-income. Poverty entails a lack of resources, but not only a lack of financial resources, a lack of emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, support systems, knowledge of middle class hidden rules, and role models. Oftentimes, when CalWORKs students come to us they are dealing with a variety of issues including domestic violence, court appearances and cases, custody battles, lack of family support, etc. Although school is a priority, they can become overwhelmed by the amount of stress of balancing their complex lives. The CSM CalWORKs program offers personal counseling, support workshops, advocacy, and resources to assist students in learning how to manage their stress. Because of the

aforementioned, the program's spirit, mission, and goals align closely with the College of San Mateo's (CSM) Mission and Value Statements, Statement of Solidarity, Strategic Priorities, the District's Strategic Goals, as well as the Education Master Plan.

- *Alignment with CSM's Mission and Value Statements, District Strategic Goals, and the Education Master Plan:*
  - o *#1 – Develop and Strengthen Educational Offerings, Interventions, and Support Programs that Increase Student Access & Success*
  - o *#2 – Establish and Expand Relationships with School Districts, 4-year College Partners, and Community-based Organizations to Increase Higher Education Attainment in San Mateo County*
  - o *#3 – Increase program delivery options, including the expanded use of instructional technology, to support student learning and success.*
  - o *#4 – EMP - External Scan (Assessing the changes in the context in which our college operates)*

The State of California recognized formally in the 1990s that equitable access and support in academic and employment pursuits is one of the most valuable and time tested ways of decreasing childhood poverty. Historically and now especially in an unprecedented educational landscape, the CalWORKs program is proud to assist the college in its mission and vision to support and aid our student parenting population. The purposefulness of the CalWORKs programmatic model allows CalWORKs practitioners to address needs equitably by individually assessing student needs and tailoring programmatic support and internal/external collaborative efforts to meet those needs.

Additionally, it is through our decades of collaborative efforts with internal partners such as Financial Aid, Sparkpoint, the Child Development Center and external partners such as San Mateo County Human Services Agency, StarVista foodbanks, shelters, and child care providers that CalWORKs establishes and continues its' practices to best support parenting students.

The thoughtfulness employed when designing the CalWORKs program allows us to continue to strive to support our students holistically, while upholding CSM's commitment to increased student access, equity, academic excellence and the District's Strategic Goals. Some of the ways in which we engage in this work include:

- ensuring each student collaborates with a CalWORKs counselor to: 1) identify their educational/career goal(s), and 2) create a comprehensive student educational plan (SEP) that is dynamic and responsive to the student's commitments outside of the classroom. This provides each CalWORKs student with a clear pathway to their educational and personal goal(s).
- Establishing a responsive and supportive relationship between each CalWORKs student and the CalWORKs Counselor/Coordinator that ensures the student's childcare and non-academic needs are met through collaboration with internal and external partners

- Facilitating and collaborating with campus partners and county partners to provide parenting and self-development workshops in addition to opportunities to establish peer-to-peer support networks

*• Identify any factors, including federal, state, or local initiatives, that have impacted the program and the students served:*

There are a number of factors that have impacted the CalWORKs program and the students served over the past two academic years. Most notably is the shifting socio/economic landscape of San Mateo County that has been exacerbated by the global COVID-19 pandemic and that is spoken to in the *External Scan (Assessing the changes in the context in which our college operates)* section of our EMP. The EMP expertly highlights the external forces that are exacerbated for CalWORKs students such as the county's soaring cost of living, worsening income disparities, the disproportionate need for low and moderate income earners to leave the region, and the decline of school age populations as the county's population shifts to an older, highly educated and wealthier demographic.

CalWORKs has often operated as the canary in the coalmine, in that our parenting students often feel the disparate impact of the county's socio-economic impacts far before our general student population. While there has been a recent increase in the number of students served by the CalWORKs program, which can mostly likely be attributed to the Global COVID-19 pandemic, as a whole, the county has been experiencing low to moderate income earner flight, as they move to more affordable geographical locations. Even with the financial support provided by the county and the CalWORKs program both academically and financially (such as housing vouchers, meal cards, etc.) those financial benefits can be of greater impact in an area with a lower cost of living.

Even with the support that county CalWORKs programming in combination with CSM CalWORKs programming can provide to parenting students, the impact of the factors mentioned above have severely decreased the number of San Mateo County residents that are eligible for CalWORKs support services. This is in addition to the difficulty that we experience identifying students who may be eligible for county services but have not yet applied. We are looking forward to partnering with the institution (through the mechanisms spoken to in AB 2881) to better identify parenting students and through on-campus partnerships, guide eligible students to support services.

Further impacting the number of students served is the inability to carry out our typical retention, outreach, and recruitment plans. Connection with local high schools and other community partners for a return to in-person/on-site outreach/recruitment engagements has been challenging at best and non-existent for most. Because the CalWORKs program actively seeks to onboard and support low-income parenting students, many of whom are first generation, re-entry, students who have experienced varying levels of trauma, and former foster youth; outreach, recruitment and retention efforts require a higher level of consistent visibility and engagement.

## 2. *Results of Previous Program Review (200-500 words)*

*a) Describe the results of your previous Program Review's action plan and
    for identified  equity gaps.*
    *a. Previous Goals*
    *b. Results Achieved*
    *c. Changes Implemented*
    *d. Plans still in progress*
    *e. Any notable or surprising results and outcomes*
*b) Explain any curriculum or programmatic changes since last program review*
    *a. To specific courses, or to any discipline as a whole*
    *b. Includes degree, certificate, or course sequences, program delivery
        or structure,  etc*
*c) Discipline-level and SLO (Student Learning Outcomes) assessment/Student Services
and SAO (Service Area Outcomes) assessment: Describe learning or area assessment
plans implemented since last Program Review, including any activities undertaken to
address equity or delivery mode gaps. Your summary should explain:*

*a. Previous Goals*

| Item | Purpose/Action | Estimated Completion |
|------|----------------|----------------------|
| Migration of services to digital platforms | Our program migrated all services including a regional CalWORKS conference that hosts 150+ participants to virtual platforms while maintaining the quality of service that our programming is known for. | Completed - Ongoing transition to a hybrid offering of services |
| Strengthen existing collaborations with on-campus partners | CalWORKs has collaborated extensively with the Child Development Center and Sparkpoint Program to enhance the experience of parenting and social workshops offered by our program. | Ongoing |
| Intentional cultivation of virtual student peer community | CalWORKs established weekly peer virtual support workshops and check-ins that served to emotionally support parenting students during this unprecedented time. | Completed |

*b. Results Achieved*

Despite the challenges presented throughout the pandemic, CalWORKs programming has
remained nimble in its flexibility to meet student needs. We were able to rapidly respond to

meet the technological needs of our students by facilitating technology pickups which included wifi-hotspots, laptops, graphing calculators and chromebooks. The global COVID 19 pandemic presented unique challenges for parenting students, as they were not only isolated from support networks but were responsible for their own academic pursuits in addition to being full-time caregivers and educators for their children with little to no social support or emotional support. In response to this unique challenge and as mentioned above, CalWORKs established and facilitated weekly peer virtual support workshops in addition to shifting the modality of our traditional parenting workshops that are held in collaboration with county partners.

The CSM CalWORKs program conceptualized and established the Region III CARE/CalWORKs Student Conference 17 years ago and to this day it still serves as an unparalleled point of connection that promotes an environment of healing and self-care for CARE and CalWORKs students studying at the 13 community colleges in our region. During the height of the pandemic, we were able to change our modality method and facilitate a live virtual conference while retaining our traditional attendee numbers of 150+ participants. This retention of participants in addition to the survey responses that we received proved the pivotal role that the conference serves to build peer support and give parenting students the tools to understand the ways in which trauma and stress can manifest in parenting and academia.

## c. Changes Implemented

Due to COVID-19 the CalWORKs program had to create an effective way of being able to engage with our students and meet their evolving needs. As mentioned above, we responded quickly to the technological needs of our students by facilitating a wide variety of technology loaner pickups. We expanded our partnerships with county agencies to provide a wider range of workshop offerings that would speak to parenting student needs throughout the transition into the height of the pandemic, a sustained shelter in place and the transition out of the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. We streamlined and digitized our services including the CalWORKs application process, forms and additional services requests. Additionally, we were able to successfully transition our parenting student conference to a virtual platform without loss of engagement.

## d. Plans still in progress

While the CalWORKs team was successful in accomplishing the goals outlined in the previous program review, we continue to make ongoing progress with the following items:

| Item | Purpose/Action | Estimated Completion |
|---|---|---|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Strengthen existing collaborations with on-campus partners | CalWORKs has collaborated extensively with the Child Development Center and Sparkpoint Program to enhance the experience of parenting and social workshops offered by our program. We will continue to assess the needs of parenting students to offer them engagement opportunities that will speak to the intersectionality of their existence. | Ongoing |
| Transition to comprehensive hybrid offering of support programming | CalWORKs students have demonstrated the need for ease of access to digitized and virtual aspects of our services such as the processing of forms, scheduling of appointments, etc. while still maintaining an ongoing desire for in-person connection, community building and peer support. | Ongoing |

*e. Any notable or surprising results and outcomes*

Some notable or surprising results that the CalWORKs program has experienced is a recent influx of CalWORKs eligible students and exponentially increased retention rates. We believe that a myriad of factors have led to this almost doubling of enrolled students; including partnerships with on campus programs, the COVID-19 pandemic which exacerbated many county residents economic struggles, and the prevalence of relevant information regarding county services and potential eligibility. Through our sustained efforts to collaborate with campus front line programs such as Financial Aid and Admissions and Records, we have been able to identify potentially eligible students earlier in their matriculation process and guide them to support program. Additionally, collaborations with Sparkpoint and institutional marketing support for Sparkpoint services have garnered more students interest in exploring county support services that they may be eligible for.

The Complex Nature of Student Retention at America's Community Colleges by Sullivan, Bell, and Nielson discusses the conclusion that "retention at community colleges is a highly complex, individualized process, with a host of variables that can affect individual students in different ways. (Their) findings also suggest that retention at community colleges may be more complex than traditional protocols currently in place can accurately measure". While EOPS/CARE and NextUP have similar intervention and support methods as CalWORKs, retention and persistence for CalWORKs students is significantly higher than the retention rates for the programs under the EOPS umbrella. Additionally, the persistence rates for CalWORKs students are significantly higher than those of the institution and the district. The CalWORKs program looks forward to partnering with PRIE and/or the RP Group to further study the unique intersectionality experienced by CalWORKs students that is culminating in rugged determination and academic retention.

*b. Explain any curriculum or programmatic changes since last program review*

Since the last program review CalWORKs has been working on improving the student experience in a hybrid educational environment by ensuring a smooth transition between in-person and online learning, and by offering more engagement opportunities, particularly during the evenings, to accommodate a wider range of student schedules and familial needs of parenting students.

CalWORKs continues to partner extensively with internal and external partners to ensure that the programming and workshops offered to parenting students remains relevant and applicable to the shifting experiences of our students. An example of these endeavors is the varied nature of our workshop offerings, from partnerships with San Mateo County and Sparkpoint to provide workshops centering around healthy food options and signing up for CalFresh services. It is through workshops such as these, that our parenting students are not only able to gain valuable knowledge about obtaining and preparing affordable, healthy and fresh meal options for their families but they are also supported and expedited through the process of applying for county services on location in the CalWORKs office.

*c) Discipline-level and SLO (Student Learning Outcomes) assessment/Student Services and SAO (Service Area Outcomes) assessment: Describe learning or area assessment plans implemented since last Program Review, including any activities undertaken to address equity or delivery mode gaps. Your summary should explain:*

- · SLO/SAO
- o What did the assessment focus on?
- o Was it discipline/program/service-specific or interdisciplinary/a collaboration between programs or services?
- o Why was it prioritized (e.g., equity issue, key disciplinary issue, etc.)?
- · Assessment results
- o What was the activity or intervention?
- o What were the outcomes?
- · Program improvements implemented
- o What did you learn from it?
- · What changed?

CalWORKs has historically addressed Service Learning Outcomes that have assessed student knowledge/access to resources, student engagement and expansion of social support networks.

- ● Increased knowledge of community and county resources

| Assessment Results | Program Improvements Implemented |
|---|---|
| Workshop attendance has consistently reflected 75% of program enrollment or higher. Students consistently engage with the presented workshop content and successfully apply to county/community resources when eligible | Implemented extensive collaborations in partnership with CSM's Child Development Center and StarVista to provide parenting students with workshops that address a wide variety of topics including community and county resources. |

- Increased student engagement in a remote/hybrid learning environment

| Assessment Results | Program Improvements Implemented |
|---|---|
| While student engagement dropped decreased for "traditional" students, our parenting students remained consistently engaged in and requested additional engagement opportunities during and after the height of the pandemic | Our program migrated all services including, academic and community building workshops in addition to a regional CalWORKs conference that hosts 150+ participants, to virtual platforms while maintaining the quality of service that our programming is known for. Additionally, the CalWORKs program offered services such as technological loaners and wifi hotspots. |

- Building Community - expanding cross regional programming to scaffold the network of support offered to students, increased collaborative efforts with sister campuses

| Assessment Results | Program Improvements Implemented |
|---|---|
| We carry out extensive surveying of our student parenting conference participants. Additionally, we look forward to a potential partnership with PRIE (The Office of Planning, Research, Innovation and Effectiveness) to implement new and effective assessment tools. | While this endeavor is an ongoing effort, the CSM CalWORKs program has benefited greatly from the collaboration that exists with our sister campuses…most notably in the partnership to plan and produce our annual parenting student conference. Additionally we partner with our sister campuses on a macro level in annual planning, assessment and outcome review during regional CalWORKs meetings, planning sessions, and the statewide Annual Technical Institute. We plan on implementing a community building collaboration with our sister campuses that students can directly benefit from in the expansion of their peer support networks. |

*(d) Challenges and Opportunities: Describe any **other** particular challenges, opportunities, or other factors that impact the success of your program (e.g., natural or health disasters, assessing whether a degree program is meeting its learning outcomes, developing new degree programs or courses, adapting to a changing student population, keeping a flagging program alive, starting a learning community, etc.).*

One of the most consistent challenges to CalWORKs programming has been a continuous (until the pandemic) reduction in CalWORKs eligible students due to the socio-economic landscape of San Mateo County. While there is currently an increase in the number of eligible CalWORKs students (post-pandemic), there has been a decades-long decrease of eligible students prior to the pandemic. There are numerous external forces that are exacerbated for CalWORKs students such as the county's soaring cost of living, worsening income disparities, the disproportionate need for low and moderate income earners to leave the region, and the decline of school age populations as the county's population shifts to an older, highly educated and wealthier demographic. As a whole, the county has been experiencing low to moderate income earner flight, as people move to more affordable geographical locations. It has become increasingly important for the CalWORKs program to continue to strengthen and reimagine collaborations with internal and external partners that can help identify parenting students who are CalWORKs eligible both before and after matriculation. Furthermore, it is increasingly important to engage with the county's parenting population prior to matriculation through targeted outreach to the county's most vulnerable communities including homeless shelters, juvenile detention centers, and centers for those impacted by domestic violence. Traditional outreach methods became unsustainable during the pandemic and continue to serve as an outreach challenge. CalWORKs looks forward to being able to re-engage with and bolster these efforts as community and interpersonal engagements return to traditional participation levels.

A second and on-going challenge to the program has been access to CalWORKs-specific data. With the support of Planning, Research, Innovation, and Effectiveness (PRIE), EOPS would like to gain clarity on the different data collection sources in order to more accurately and efficiently improve program assessments. Additionally, CalWORKs would like to partner with PRIE to assess the effectiveness of our internal student assessment tools. This collaboration will help us determine the effectiveness of our programming, while also allowing increased responsiveness to the shifting needs of our students.

### *4. Planning*
### *a) Program goals*
*Based on your current review of your program's equity gaps, learning*

*assessments and  challenges and opportunities, identify specific goals and plans.*

*Please note that closing equity gaps is a College-wide priority. If there are significant equity  gaps in student success, persistence, satisfaction, utilization or enrollment, and student  population served in your program, these should be addressed in at least one of your goals.*

Because we experienced substantial declines in students served (prior to the pandemic), CalWORKs will implement plans to enhance our outreach, recruitment and retention efforts. We will re-strategize to expand access, support, and intentional interventions for parenting students through new and innovative collaborative efforts. We greatly anticipate the robust partnership that we are sure the institution will invest in to support the newly enacted and unique AB 2881 legislation.

| Goal | Actions | Measurable Outcomes | Timeline | Responsible  Party | Support Needed |
|------|---------|---------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|
| Expand and enhance CDC (Child Development Center) collaboration | Continue and expand collaboration w/ campus partners (CDC, FA, SparkPoint, Personal Counseling | Examine the engagement numbers of students pre and post collaboration and implement assessment tools | Ongoing | P. Reed-Fort | |

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| Partner with the institution to meet the legislative goals of AB 2881 | Set collaboration bench marks necessary to meet the intended goals of AB 2881 (increased data collection, priority registration for parenting students, provision of resource navigation, etc) | In partnership with the institution, various outcome assessments will need to be implemented to determine the effectiveness of the various focal points highlighted in the recent legislation | Sp 24 and future semesters | P. Reed-Fort | Dependent on the needs identified once collaborative efforts commence |
| Assessment and implementation of efforts necessary to continue to growth of program participants. Targeted programming, recruitment and retention of CalWORKs eligible parenting students | Targeted outreach to local high schools and community groups/orgs (churches, shelters, e.g Samaritan House  juvenile detention center, centers for domestic violence) | Outreach reports to demonstrate # of events/contacts w/ prospective students<br><br>Utilize CalWORKs application data to track how students learned of program | Sp 24 and future semesters | P. Reed-Fort | |
| Increase cross campus collaboration with sister programs in the district and explore partnerships aimed at increasing the financial literacy offerings of the CalWORKs program | Increased partnership/collaboration with CAN and SKY CalWORKs programs to expand the support network parenting students can access<br><br>Partner with Sparkpoint and potential | Assess the number of CalWORKs students who set financial literacy goals and work in collaboration with Sparkpoint to meet said goals. | Sp 24 and future semesters | P. Reed-Fort | |

| | partnership with external financial agencies to support students as they are introduced to financial literacy concepts | | | | |
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| Increase visibility of parenting student population needs on campus and provide increased access to resources/support. | Update Canvas shell, include community events, continue to establish community of support of parenting students.<br><br>Share data with key stakeholders on campus. | Track the number of parenting students who use the Canvas shell and utilize the information provided.<br><br>Track retention of parenting students who participate in workshops and community gatherings. | Ongoing | P. Reed-Fort and M. Barrientos | Support from staff to maintain/update Canvas shell regularly with current events/information. |