

Minutes
November 20, 2025
Hilton Gardens – 601 James Way, Pismo California
Focus Topic – Child Welfare

Present:

Reuben Addo	Dalvin Baker	Tracey Belton	Maria Bermudez
Sanja Bugay	John Ceccoli	Katherine Coggin	Monica Connor
Jeff Davis	Devin Drake	Sydney Forga	David Foster L
Lauri Haro	Kathryn Harwell	Christine Huber	Sam Kaish
Rudo S. Kamutepfa	Kelly Knutson	Nancy Kuster	Amy Krueger
Nadia Lopez	Donna Lutz	Deborah Martinez	Joshua Mercier
Lito Morillo	Wendy Osikafo	Arthur Aguilar Perez	Akkia Pride-Polk
Gilberto Rivas	Kim Smith	Kelly Woodard	

- 1. Welcome & Introductions – Christine Huber – Vice Chair**

- 2. Student Stipend Presentation**
Arthur Aguilar Perez, MSW
Resource Parent Satisfaction and Support from CWS During Their Time Fostering.
Presented questions and answers. Power point sent out via email.

- 3. Student Stipend Presentation**
Rudo Sandra Kamutepfa, MSW
Exploring the Role of Cultural Brokers in Enhancing Prevention Planning Services
Within the Child Welfare System-Focus on Tulare County Health and Human Services.
Presented and questions answered Power Point sent out via email.

- 4. CFT/CANS = Akkia Pride Polk-San Joaquin & Monica Conner - Kings**
Integrated Practice and Adolescent Needs and Strengths IP CANS and child and Family
Teams CFT. The CPIP will help determine if the practice has fidelity. Due April 1, 2025.
County Practice and Improvement Plan. ACL-25-54. Fidelity and Continuous Quality
Improvement Tools require to enhance IP CANS and CFT practices. Highlight discussed
and a power point shared will all attendees.
Key elements for fidelity support, system level, case level, IP CANS data & report,
training, coaching and technical assistance.
CPIP Workgroup, Local Tribes and ILT must be also engaged in the completion process,
also child welfare, probation, behavioral health education regional center tribal
partners.
CCTA provides technical assistance. Time commitment is 5-6 sessions 90 minutes
each. The state will also be training. CCTA is offering technical assistance. The Tool
has approximately 100 items.

5. Tiered Rate Structure – Kim Smith/Monica Connor

Side by Side Comparison included in the power point packet. Another comparison : Level of Care Protocol vs. Tiered Rate Structure. See Power Point. CARES Go live timeline for Version One launches October 2026. Federal Government has not approved full funding. As a result of the Federal Shut down and pending funding approvals, four areas have been paused, including training support. CARES pilot, slowing down Sandbox and pausing the addition of new users, preparation for process simulations intended to come during the final testing simulations for refining the “to be” business mapping. All projects pertaining to training activities have been paused effective November 3, 2025. Discussed county form development, challenges, and due date. Counties are expected to have created any forms identified as necessary by the first day of production in October 2026. There are many challenges in creating the forms and the mapping tied to them.

Discussed training for implementation. Train the Trainer and Super User Training will be conducted June 15, 2026 – July 24, 2026. Instructor - Led training will be August 3, 2026 – October 26, 2026. Staff are to complete 19.5 to 40 hours depending on their assigned training curriculum. A recommendation was made to get clarification on equipment needs for training and training environment due to

Financial Comparison chart discussed

Permanent Foster Care Tiered Rate Structure Framework chart discussed. Concerned discussed, moving toward a watered-down wrap program.

Listen to discussions on flexibility. CDSS is hosting listening sessions.

Forms, counties are expected to create any forms identified as necessary on the first day of production October 2026. Counties are concern there are several forms to convert which require extensive time on top of day-to-day duties.

6. CWS - CARES – Maria Bermudez – Kern & Kim Smith – Fresno

Things have changed in last two weeks. CWS/CMS will be in readable mode. October 2026 is the official go live date.

They have been having monthly check-ins. No new on Boarding. Training activities have been paused. Regardless, counties are still be asked to address readiness. Sand Box allows exposure to the feature. This is on paused.

Conversion external system. Efforts are under way to prepare external systems for CARES.

Training Train the Trainer and Superuser Training 6/15 – 7-24-26. Concern discussed on the training. Use of others forms/modify to your needs. Staff are to complete 19.5 to 40 hours of training.

As is, to be workflows. Expectation is bringing in their workloads. 8 weeks to make shifts in business practices.

Hosting two learning collaboratives, one happened, one is today.

County readiness. Impact on workloads. New features, changes will impact staff workflows, training, policy and procedure redesign, form development, training plans and implementation.

Fresno Lessons learned explored.

Kern discussed their launch which was a build a new, Legos. They did a kickoff.

Fresno focused on engagement. Intentional, on how they inform staff. CARES portal on the desktop. Using the up , lift off themes. It was portal, staff can review the information. Client to participant. Use of informational blasts. They have done contests. In October, starting monthly pod casts. Seeking active participation. Word of the week. They did an executive summary.

7. Innovative Programs/Strategies – Monica Conner & Group

Survey was sent out with the following Questions:

- **Please describe any innovative programs, practices or staffing strategies you county has implemented to strengthen child welfare services?**
- **Which Program Areas have these innovations primarily focused on?**
- **What was the identified need or problem your county aimed to address with this approach?**
- **What has been the impact of this strategy or program so far?**
- **Describe results or early outcomes regarding Question 6.**
- **How have you funded or sustained these innovations?**
- **What challenges or barriers did you encounter while implementing your innovations/**
- **Have you partnered with other department or agencies to support these efforts?**
- **What challenges or barriers did you encounter while implementing your innovation?**
- **What advice would you give other counties considering implementing a similar strategy?**

Discussed survey results, which are included in the Power Point.

Mariposa: RFA

San Joaquin Multiple programs – locating family members/engaging/finding them. 52 percent were placed with relatives.

Madera Prevention/Early Intervention

Stanislaus: Post – Adoption Navigation service

Kern: Emergency – kin first placement. Focused on internal processes to increase placement with relatives first. Partnering with Law enforcement. Transfer of custody process is changing.

Kings – added an MSW level social worker to specialize in post adoption services.

8. Linkages 2.0 – Maria Bermudez

Provide a historical overview of Linkages. AB429 and AB 135 – it is a collaborative between CalWORKs and Child Welfare. Promotes financial self-sufficiency, economic mobility, and child well-being by leveraging resources from both systems.

Kern update. They came up with a Message – “The Prevention Puzzle.” The message: Everyone plays a role in preventing child abuse. Their key focus areas include Training and Communication, established units, public outreach. They created learning circles. A case shared between Child Welfare Family Services Division and CalWORKs through AB429 is considered a Linkages case. Additionally provided mandated reported training to Eligibility staff, mail room staff, maintenance staff, welfare to work.

Stanislaus: expanding into family reunification is new. Once child removed, a referral is made and family assessed (linked). Only 27 percent of cases coming in are eligible for cash aid. They are looking into this.

9. Central Valley Emergency Response Referral Data Maria Bermudes. This data is from Berkeley

Provided information on Kern, Fresno, Tulare, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus. All child populations went down. Allegation rates are .61 to 10.23%. All counties listed decreased in their substantiation rate. Evaluate outs, we are seeing the same trend of increases. Foster care entries are dropping in all the listed counties.

10. Dr Addo – University Report

Fresno State accepting applications for the MSW program. He has students looking into research. He asked about raw data that the counties might have. Dr. Addo is currently working with the Adult Services Training Academy on Embodied Labs – specifically the Beatrice lab. The goal of the research project is to test if participation in virtual reality training, i.e. Beatrice Lab increases in the individual Social Worker’s empathy.

November 21, 2025

Sea Venture

100 Ocean View Ave

Pismo Beach CA 93449

Check Out by 11:00 AM

7:30 – 8:30 Breakfast

8:30 – 9:00 Round Table Directors

9:00 – 9:30 Training Advisory Meeting – Donna Lutz

Training Advisory Group has been functioning for about one year and engagement and participation is

increasing. The purpose of the TAG is to share information/updates related to CWS and Adults, share

information about training needs in the County, and share information between Counties. TAG is a forum for

counties to inform the RTA about training needs in CWS and Adults. Also to share informations about

program and policy updates, legislation, etc. Workforce Development Specialists are assigned to each county,

work with each county, schedule training based on the needs assessment that was conducted, and continue to

schedule new worker training. CARES training and support continues to be in development at the Academy .

Suggested it would be helpful to received training plan and schedule of training related to CARES

implementation when known. RTA roles in CARES training will be after roll out is finished. RTA will be

responsible for training new workers after roll out. Discussed hiring time frames related to CARES rollout.

State has been tasked with evaluating the Title IV Program. The States is doing a state wide survey which

counties have responded to and the State has now scheduling listening session with Counties to be conducted

by UCLA. The listening session is scheduled for the next TAG meting. Encourage each county to have

someone on the call to have Central Valley voice.

9:30 – 10:00 Research Discussion – CWDA Carlos Marquez and Diana Boyer –

Donna Lutz & Kelly Woodard

Carlos and Dianna are seeking input into research. Question to Directors what research would be useful. What will be helpful in the coming year would be understanding all the implications of HR1, PRWORA, etc - getting information to synthesis impacts on current staffing, funding, customer base. It would be helpful to get information on efficiencies that we can get.

Example of something that would be helpful in research for Kin First - Placement of Kids with relatives/siblings for those counties below the average. It would be helpful to have someone go through/research the 10 counties above the average, research their processes and how they have moved placement percentages. Recommendations for actual implementations/policies/practices.

Challenge is there aren't things that are researched based in our efforts. Much is about slowing down, "good social work" practices. Often times the values is in the sharing.

Another example would be Cultural Brokers - research and impact.

CANS and CFT - how to make this more effective.

Looking for practical steps now due to environment

Discussion about bypass laws - could there be a research piece to see what other states/countries are doing . This is one of the

more complex areas of the WIC Code. There is no easy way to gain data across counties.

What are the factors for determination of services to parents/reunification . How do other

States do this (predict).

Alameda Placement Bill

10:00 – 10:45 Legislative Discussion – carry over from September

-Discussion about possible Regional representation on Legislative Committee. Structure at CWDA to be finalized in

December. Discussed that it would be helpful to have AD/Deputy level representation on each committee from Central Region.

Will continue to review options for Central representations. Appear Central has representation for Eligibility and Adults.

-Recommend regional Chairs to put legislation on their meeting agenda. Kelly will reach out to Regional Chairs.

-Recommend CWDA send Legislative bill review/status report to Directors after each Legislative Meeting.

-Will check in back in at March meetings

-New Legislation in October - AB 562- Foster Care Family Placement Family Finding

2027 Monitoring for Sibling Placement / Kinship Placements (at or above State Rates)- Center of Excellence

10:30 – 10:45 Topics Fiscal March 2026 Kelly Woodard

- Directors want to wait for January Budget to be released to determine topics.

10:45 – 11:00 Break (check out 11:00 am)

11:00 – 11:15 Federal Shutdown/Implications –Group

11:15 – 11:45 Cal Wise Discussion and Overview of Structure – Donna Lutz

The shut down of CalSWEC required need for restructuring. CAL WISE has now
been

established - California Workforce Innovation Support and Education. The new
organizational charts were provided to the Directors and discussed. The new org
chart

shows were the Cal Academies report in the CDSS structure.

Upcoming Meetings:

February 19 & 20 2026 – Fiscal – Cancelled

March 5, 6 2026 – Fiscal new Date

April 30 & May 1 2026 – Adult

September 24 & 25 2026 – Self Sufficiency

November 19 & 20, 2026 – Child Welfare – Cancelled

November 5, 6, 2026 – Child Welfare

JV285 - Relative Information to the Courts - Form

**November 21, 2025
Sea Venture
100 Ocean View Ave
Pismo Beach California**

Present:

Tracey Belton	John Ceccoli	Devin Drake	David Foster
Katherine Harwell	Christine Huber	Sam Kasich	Donna Lutz
Nadia Lopez	Debora Martinez	Lito Morillo	Wendy Osikafo
Kelly Woodard			

1. Round Table Directors

Medical/indigent care and qualifications. Premiums were discussed. A couple of CCASSC Counties have Public Hospitals, and concern was raised about the impact.

Eligibility discussed, retro medical timeframe discussed. AB85 discussed. CSAC is probably taking the lead. Realignment discussed. Indigent care discussed. Need for advocacy; and understanding the numbers is important.

Discussed impact of the Federal Shutdown on local programs and assistance.

Discussion of impacts on Public Health, Behavioral health, and Indigent Care and realignment funding (AB-85 – Health Realignment.

Discussed food supply issues. Some had enough food at their food banks; some declared an emergency. The pros and cons of declaring an emergency was discussed..

Information about New Paths program, and the New Paths Conference was shared.

Information share on CalSAWs and its change process and vendor changes.

Discussion of staffing/hiring, vacancy rates, and current budget implications.

Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act 1996 – PROWRA was Discussed possible impacts to PROWRA - Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act. 1996 – PROWRA. This a Federal Law that restructured the Welfare's system and established rules for immigrants eligibility for federal public benefits.

Action: Next meeting ask Chris Woods and Francena to report out on CalSAWS. Put on Friday's meeting.

Agenda next meeting. Discussion of Chris and Francena to report out on Cal Saws. Put on Friday's meeting next meeting...pulling reports.

Discussion of hiring staff. Discussion of hiring staff. Counties discussed their approaches. Keeping a margin of vacancies.

Law suit feds on Prowora, Personal Responsibility and and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 discussion.

2. Training Advisory Meeting – Donna Lutz and Kelly Woodard

A group functioning for awhile. Much more engaged. CARES, planning for newbies. Work force Development for newbies. Scheduling. CAREs, can't get in sandbox.

Can't access and look at materials

Training is online for Adults/Children's

Work Force Specialist, works with the county coordinator. We have a master Calendar. Can share with counties. If a person is in need of a training, we get them plugged.

How training intersects with CARES is the question.

Evaluating IVE Program, Training Advisory, will be one of the listening. Discussion on where the questions came from. Only 2 counties did not complete

3. Research Discussion – CWDA Carlos Marquez and Diana Boyer – Donna Lutz & Kelly Woodard

Forward thinking things, survival month
Anywhere we can look at more with less,
Strategies and efficiencies.
Siblings placement, is an important area.
Go through 10 counties that are 40 percent. Look at
What needs to be done.
How to operational level. Counties that are doing better.
Operational CAREs – process driven
Timing is concerning right now.
Cultural Broker
Kin First
CFTs
Outward research
Bypass law changes.....
CWDA is looking for us to take a lead on vs. being in self defence mode.

Sanja, Bypass, piece, advocate say, county by county we behave differently.
Likelihood of reunification, make the law better, to determine if parent can reunify.
Law is not helpful. Fixes in the law, this could lead to a research roll for this group.
Last year children's seem to agree, the piecemeal approach is a concern. It would be
much helpful if it was cleaned up. Not sure if this is a top concern. Deborah, data
would be helpful. Sacramento has a good policy and procedure. Judges and
children's attorneys, present variables. Do you offer, not offer services.
How do other states. Predictive measure.

**4. Legislative Discussion – carry over from September Need people on committees.
Wendy, knowledge in these areas. How we can better represent. Check in March.
Fresno is sending as an employment services rep. San Joaquin is sending Adult.
Devin is sending Eligibility. Sharing with this group.**

Action: Ask Regional groups to put bills on their Agendas

5. Topics Fiscal February 2026 Kelly Woodard Send an email in January.

6. Break (check out 11:00 am)

7. Cal Wise Overview - Donna Lutz the shutdown of CalSwec, now Cal Wise. Donna went over the list/organization chart. Discussion of what needs to be revamped. The green is who we report to, blue is who also gives us work. The communication can be challenging at times.

8. Federal Shutdown – /Implications Social Welfare - Group

Upcoming Meetings:

– Fiscal working on new date

April 30 & May 1, 2026 – Adult

September 24 & 25 2026 – Self Sufficiency

– Child Welfare – working on new date