

The CalWIN Team:
**Creating Seamless Support Teams Between the
Departments of Program and Technology**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

There is no clear distinction between technology and program in the CalWORKS Information Network (CalWIN) system. This contradicts its predecessor, the Case Data System (CDS) which was primarily program driven. This change has an impact on the organizational structure of an agency and creates obstacles between the departments required to collaborate when providing support to CalWIN users.

In Alameda County, the primary CalWIN support departments (program, technology and training) are now located in two divisions and locations. This creates obstacles for staff in their ability to work together as a team in providing support to CalWIN users. The organizational structure of the CDS era does not support the CalWIN system of today, and finding ways to bring the departments of program, technology, and training together is needed.

Findings

San Mateo County has introduced a reorganization of its CalWIN Implementation Team that brings technology together with program in one unit working together as a support team for CalWIN users.

Implications

Alameda County can use San Mateo County's reorganization model as a guide to introduce seamless support teams between program and technology departments as an informal process and create a new CalWIN support division at no cost and with minimal effort.

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Introduction

Teamwork is a major ingredient for success whether you are managing a sports team or a government agency. The team's management staff needs to successfully collaborate with each other to identify common goals and share knowledge and expertise to ensure success for players once they are on the playing field. This type of teamwork will make the difference between winning and losing a game, and every effort must be made to create a team environment both on and off the field.

What social service agencies have discovered since implementation of the \$744 million dollar computer system CalWIN in Placer County, in January 2005, is that teamwork between the departments providing users with technical, training and program support, has become a critical necessity. They have been faced with finding ways to create support teams between these departments in CalWIN, based on an organizational structure born in the 1960's and carried into the Welfare Case Data Systems (WCDS) era. WCDS was an integrated welfare management system where workers manually collect demographic, resource, and income information and then, using online screens, enter the information into WCDS. This was primarily driven by programs in the administration department only, while CalWIN, is a fully automated computer system and requires constant collaboration between both technology and program departments. This is

the new CalWIN culture of program and technology working together on the same team.

The responsibilities of staff in each CalWIN support department have primarily remained the same, but the need to create a new team of players from the departments of program, technology and training, was created with the implementation of CalWIN. Departments can no longer work independent of each other and this has a direct impact on the organizational structures created during the CDS years.

The Challenge

In the early 1980's, WCDS was introduced to Alameda County, and program, training, and technical support were all managed under the administration division. This was during a time when the agency was smaller and social services was not regulated or automated as it is today. CalWIN was implemented in Alameda County in December 2005 under its existing organizational structure from WCDS, which was designed to be program driven with departments working independently.

Currently, Information Services, which includes the CalWIN Help Desk, is located at one office under the Administration and Finance Division. Program Planning and Support, are located at a different office under the Workforce and Benefits Administration Division. This organizational structure creates barriers between the very departments

CalWIN requires collaboration with. Staff are faced with a variety of challenges when trying to find ways to work as a team across departments, including:

- individual division locations;
- priority setting; and
- staff assignment identification on other projects.

Teams across departments are needed for collaborating to develop a business process that will influence the new CalWIN culture being introduced in the agency as well as the quality of materials being utilized in training and produced in newsletters and procedures. The current structure does not support a program and technology collaboration or an overall team effort, because it is the remnant of the CDS program's only organizational structure. The challenge for Alameda County is to create seamless support teams between the departments of program and technology under the existing WCDS program-only, organizational structure.

San Mateo County's Planned CalWIN Reorganization

San Mateo County was faced with similar challenges regarding creating opportunities for program, training, and technical staff to work collectively as a team in providing support to its CalWIN users. They created a CalWIN Leadership Team of both program and technical members that included:

- CalWORKs Program Manager/Regional Manager (dual roles)
- Medi-Cal Program Manager/Manager of Medi-Cal TeleCenter (dual roles)
- Food Stamps and General Assistance Program Manager
- Other Regional Managers
- IT Manager
- Advisory Member: Self-Sufficiency Director
- Advisory Member: IT Director

Together this team meets regularly and includes agenda items, such as:

- Integration between Program and CalWIN
- Training
- Communication
- Production Calls

- Workgroups/Subgroups
- CalWIN Management Reports
- Supervisors Role in Supporting Staff: Post CalWIN

The CalWIN IT staff, which is located within the Central Information Technology Department, is separate in location and supervision from the program staff. The Program staff provides CalWIN and program training with the exception of induction training for new employees.

Utilizing the teamwork strategies learned from the CalWIN Leadership Team, San Mateo County has introduced a reorganization plan that will partner the CalWIN Implementation Team with the CalWIN Program Department. This may serve as a model for bringing the departments of program, training and technology together with other social service organizations.

Under the new reorganization, Program Specialist (PS) and Information Technology (IT) Analyst are partnered by program assignments, such as:

- Medi-Cal;
- General Assistance;
- Food Stamps;
- CalWORKs/Welfare To Work;
- Workforce Investment; and
- New Worker Training Unit/Earned Income Tax Credit.

Working together, they provide program and technical support to CalWIN users in the agency.

They will also conduct program and system training together. Help Desk issues will be addressed by program and IT as well. The unit will be assigned to an IT Supervisor and a CalWIN Manager. It has been requested that the new unit, tentatively called Program Leadership, be housed close by, preferably in the same building, with the CalWIN program staff. This reorganization is scheduled for July 2007, and there are no costs anticipated for the county with this reorganization. All staffing will remain at the same level, and staff are being transitioned from one area to another.

San Mateo County also created a great opportunity to continue team-building among staff in dif-

ferent departments and to identify the needs of users when it conducted a satisfaction survey during an agency picnic held one year after their CalWIN go-live date of October 2005. All agency staff were invited to attend the event and asked to participate in the survey. All responses were encouraged, regardless if they were positive or negative, and the results were well-received. These data are used to assist the CalWIN support team in its continued staff support.

Seamless Support Teams in Alameda County

The CalWIN reorganization model San Mateo County plans to implement can be utilized in Alameda County informally under the current organizational structure and then serve as a transition for the introduction of a new division in the Administration and Finance Department. It would combine the units of Information Services, Program Planning and Support, and Training into a combined CalWIN Technical Support Team.

Initially an informal model allows staff to remain assigned to their current divisions in different locations; there would be no change in supervision and minimal or no cost associated with implementing the model.

Program System Coordinators from Information Services would be partnered with Program Specialists from Workforce and Benefits Administration by program. Regularly scheduled meetings would be required for the ongoing development of procedures, introduction of newsletters to staff, troubleshooting of cases, review of future CalWIN releases and all program and technical CalWIN support issues. Help Desk ticket review would be included as part of this team effort. The smaller teams, two or three staff members from each division, would meet at least bi-weekly with the three divisions meeting jointly at least bi-monthly.

A transition to the new division would require reassignment of staff to one central location. This move also adds minimal or no cost to the existing budget. This is primarily a re-arranging of departments, not adding any new positions or the reclassifying of job duties. The new division would allow for the seamless support teams that previously worked together in different locations informally, to now be located in the same office, reporting to the same Division Director of CalWIN and Program Support and Training.

This new division would guarantee a partnership between program, training and technology departments. It would support shared learning, increase problem-solving, and ensure the agency has appropriate representation at the CalWIN Workgroup at the appropriate level for our county. These specialists working together allow for integrated learning regarding CalWIN changes as well as implementation where expertise from all departments is needed.

Conclusion

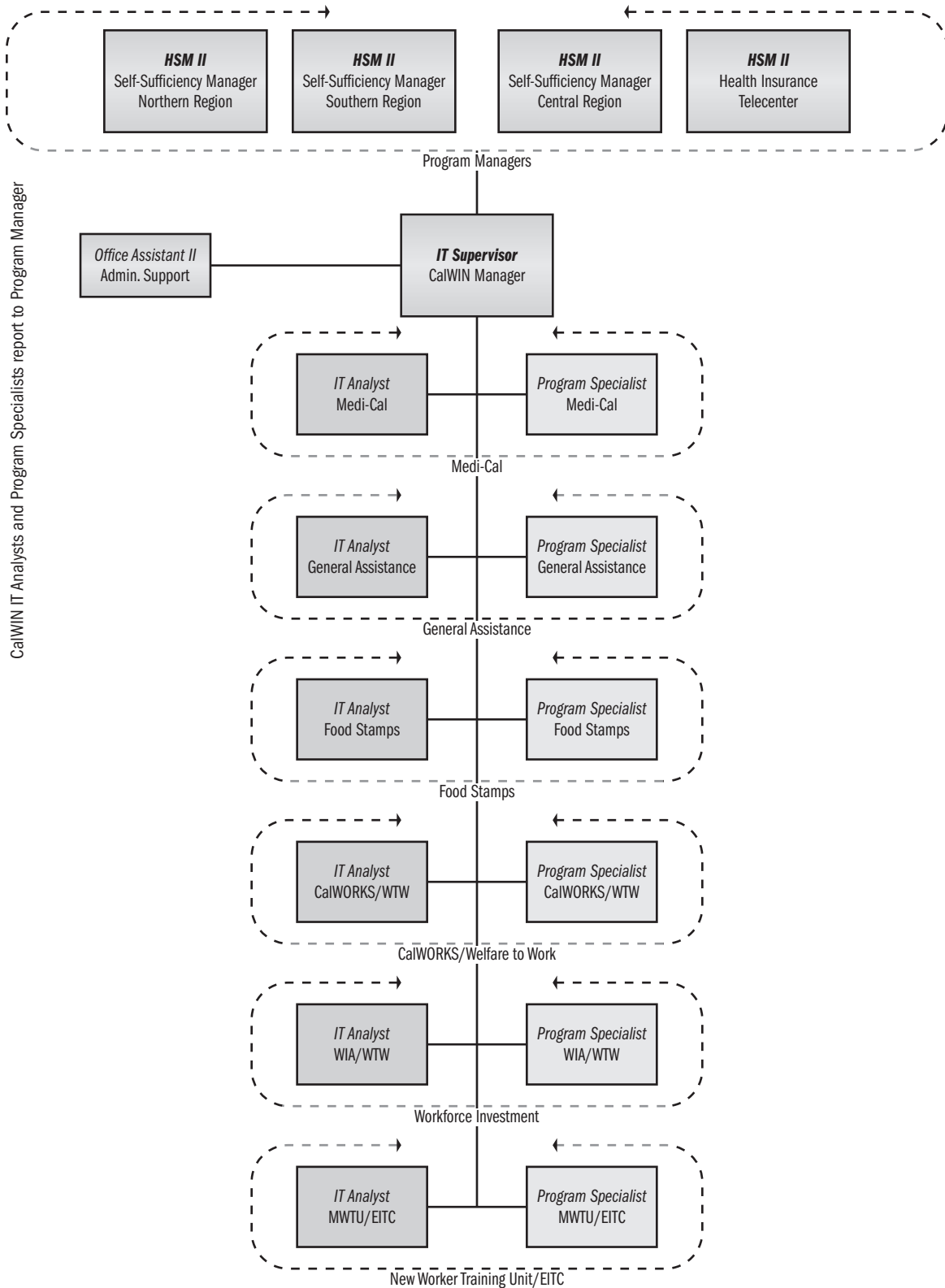
With the implementation of CalWIN, a new culture has been introduced in Alameda County, and it has created the need for the agency to reorganize the CalWIN support team. The seamless support teams introduced are an informal start to a new division which would bring the CalWIN technical support staff together in one location and allow them the opportunity to consolidate their efforts and share their program and technical expertise.

Acknowledgements

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APPENDIX 1

San Mateo County Proposed CalWIN Program Leadership



APPENDIX 2

Alameda County Proposed CalWIN Technical Support Division

