

**ASSESSING THE SAN MATEO SUCCESS MODEL IN
RELATIONSHIP TO STRENGTHENING THE CONTRA COSTA
CAL WORKS SERVICE DELIVERY SERVICE**

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Implementation of CalWORKs in January 1998 resulted in many dramatic changes in the Department of Social Services. Eligibility determinations and the issuance of benefits are no longer the focus of Contra Costa County staff in the bureau formerly known as Income Maintenance. Services which help our participants find employment and become self sufficient are now the primary responsibility of our newly titled Employment and Supportive Services Bureau. The means tested programs are simply one of the supportive services we provide to our participants.

Prior to implementation of CalWORKS our department involved line staff in various capacities to help design our current service delivery model and flesh out the duties of the newly created Employment Specialist. The Employment Specialist position combines the eligibility and benefit responsibilities with employment focused case management responsibilities. Employment Specialists provide employment and eligibility services to CalWORKs participants who have a work participation requirement. Benefit Specialists, former Eligibility Workers, provide services to categorical aid applicants or recipients who do not have a CalWORKS work participation requirement. The Employment Specialist position is a promotional opportunity for Benefit Specialists. Most of our line staff tested for the Employment Specialist positions and 183 people have promoted to this position since implementation of the employment focused service delivery model.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of my BASSC Project were to review the service delivery models in Alameda and San Mateo counties and identify any procedures we could adapt that would make our model more effective and efficient.

HOST COUNTY SELECTION PROCESS:

At the request of my Director, John Cullen. I asked one of my BASK colleagues from each of the BASSC counties to complete a fifteen question survey. In January when I compiled the results of the survey, only three counties had integrated the Welfare to Work Employment functions with the eligibility functions: San Mateo County, San Francisco County and Contra Costa County. Alameda County and Monterey County had plans to implement pilot projects of integrated CalWORKs eligibility and Welfare to Work functions. Based on the results of this survey we chose San Mateo County and Alameda County.

OVERVIEW OF CONTRA COSTA COUNTY:

I visited three of our district offices in preparation for my visits to the other counties. I found most of our Employment Specialist staff challenged and excited about their new jobs. They welcome the opportunity to provide case management to the participants with the hope that they

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can work together to develop a plan that will lead to the family's self-sufficiency. Each district office had modified the overall service delivery plan to meet the needs of their customers and the dynamics of their particular office.

Areas of concern common to all offices include:

- Continuity of worker/participant relationship.
- The length of time a case is in pre-assessment.
- Integration of the caseload management responsibilities with eligibility responsibilities.
- Frustration with GAIN Information System (GIS), a non-user friendly system.
- The need for one system that will interface since workers struggle with three systems, (MEDS, CDS and GIS).
- CalWORKS program was not simplified.
- Meth-Cal units have many vacancies as a result of workers promoting to the Employment Specialists positions thus creating high caseload counts for experienced workers or banked cases.
- Medi-Cal units have many workers new to the agency, including EW Temps.

SAN MATEO COUNTY: THE SUCCESS MODEL

San Mateo County received federal and state waivers and implemented their SUCCESS model in August of 1997. They worked out agreements with their employee unions that they would implement, let staff self-select their positions whenever possible and negotiate salary and case loads standards at a later date. When I was in San Mateo County late in March 1999 the county and the employee union organizations had just reached satisfactory agreements and the contract was signed off during the time I was visiting their county.

The SUCCESS Model has Screening Assessment Specialists (SAS) who are generic intake workers who screen for all program eligibility and issue immediate need benefits.

The Income and Employment Service Specialist (JESS) combines the eligibility functions and Welfare to Work (WTW) case management functions for TANF clients required to participate in WTW activities. The Employment Services Specialist (ESS) position is responsible for delivering information and training to the participant. MediCal only. GA. some Non-Assistance Food Stamps cases and TANF Child Only cases eligibility are processed by Eligibility Technicians.

The caseload standard for the IESS, the on-going case manager, was 60 during the pilot period. The final agreement with the employee organizations brought that number down to 45. A case

coming from the SAS that needs the eligibility piece to be completed is simply one case. It is not weighted as an intake case. I found consensus among the line staff and supervisors that I interviewed regarding the IESS caseload standard of 45. This number is manageable as long as the intake number is low. One new intake case per week is doable. Two to three intake cases per week are too many and begs the question of whether combined intake and field functions are compatible.

OVERVIEW OF SAN MATEO COUNTY

My visit to San Mateo County included a visit to an outstationed site in Menlo Park, time at the Redwood City Office, contacts with staff development and managers at the Belmont Office and a trip to Daly City. I met with line staff, first line supervisors, analysts and managers. There is a lot of activity going on in San Mateo County. Offices are being remodeled, employment workshops are full and the staff is helping people find work and become self-sufficient. CalWORKs intake and on-going caseloads are declining. The total number of MediCal cases has increased minimally.

There has been relative stability in the MediCal units in San Mateo. They had not yet implemented 1931B and most of their line staff are experienced MediCal workers. The department is recruiting and hiring "Extra Help Positions" for the MediCal Benefits Analyst position. The department anticipates that their newly negotiated caseload standard for MediCal based on families, not MFBUs, and the likelihood that the current MediCal Benefits Specialists will want to promote to the new positions in the SUCCESS model will result in the need for new MediCal workers.

San Mateo County pioneered the San Mateo Access to Resource Tracking (SMART). This system has many capabilities that are vital to the changes resulting from welfare reform. SMART can interface with the Welfare Case Data System (CDS), the

GAIN Information System (GIS) and the Job Training Automation system (JTA). Documentation can be made available to all the workers interacting with the participant. Electronic pre-screening can be performed and automatic referrals to various departments and/or organizations can be produced.

SMART has the capacity to produce automated surveys and record the various performance outcome measures mandated by the TANF legislation. SMART supports an Intranet system that allows for on-line department manuals, aid payment charts and program cheat sheets.

ALAMEDA COUNTY'S SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM:

Alameda County had not yet integrated the intake eligibility and case management functions when I visited their county. They hope to have their pilot project up by July, 1999. The combined eligibility and case management position will be staffed with Employment Counselors. Employment Counselors are the former GAIN workers. The Employment Counselor (EC) position has always been a promotional opportunity for the Eligibility Technician (ET) series in Alameda County. It was not and is not a social worker position.

Alameda County has redesigned their service delivery model to accommodate the demands of the welfare reform work first mandate. They have established a Benefit Center. The workers at the Benefit Center are generic Eligibility Technician III (ET III) who do not have face to face client contact. Eventually the workers at the Benefit Center will be responsible for providing eligibility services for 350 cases per worker. Automated support systems have been developed to support the Benefit Center. Most MediCal cases will be serviced at the Enterprise MediCal Center. Customer Contact Units have been established in the neighborhood offices. The Customer Contact Units are staffed by ET IIIs who see the customers who come into the office for service. Most case actions are referred to the Benefit Center Worker for processing. Simple actions like an address change can be processed by the clerical support who answer the specially designed telephone system at the Benefit Center.

ETs currently do program specific intake. Once the case is approved the benefits portion of the case is transferred to the Benefit Center and the WTW case is transferred to an Employment Counselor who works with the client to develop a WTW plan. The Employment Counselors provide the Welfare to Work Services for CalWORKs participants. The Employment Counselor position does not have a caseload cap. Job Clubs/Job Search are conducted by Employment Counselors and one of the forty agencies contracted to do JobClub/Job Search activities. The assessments are contracted out to Peralta Community College and Chabot College vocational counselors.

When eligibility and WTW are integrated at intake, the Employment Counselor (EC) will do an initial appraisal and approve benefits. The case will remain with the EC until the Welfare to Work Plan is signed or until aid is denied, discontinued, diversion is authorized, the non-compliance process starts or the case otherwise completes the intake phase. During this period, the EC performs all eligibility, employment service, case management, counseling, referral and other activities required by CalWORKs. The EC will not conduct Job Club, but will refer the clients. After the assessment is scheduled the EC will transfer the eligibility case to the Benefit Center and the employment case to EC Case Management. The department proposed intake standard is set at twenty new applications per month. Social Workers located in the Self-sufficiency Centers will provide intensive services for WTW clients and do SSI Advocacy services.

OVERVIEW OF ALAMEDA COUNTY:

I visited the Hayward office, North Oakland, Enterprise, 401 Broadway and the Benefit Center. I met with managers, analysts, line supervisors and line staff. There is a lot of movement in Alameda County. New Self-Sufficiency Centers are opening and buildings are being remodeled. Many workers have promoted to ET III or Employment Counselor positions. Alameda County has vacancies in the MediCal units because of the promotional opportunities. They have not yet implemented 1931 B. The Customer Contact units that I saw were very busy.

Alameda County has moved forward to increase technology capabilities and reduce paper. They have automated the status report process by barcoding the CA7s. At the Benefit Center, CA7s are logged in clerically. CA7s with no changes are filed by the clerks. The ET never touches the

no change status reports. Cases are automatically placed on suspend if they are not logged in by the 5th of the month. The notices are auto-generated. When they are received and are scanned the suspend is automatically released.

Alameda County has developed the Welfare Information System for Everyone (WISE). This system provides on-line documentation, an application summary, a chronological report that documents earned income, reinvestigation and recertification forms, a case assignment menu and has the capability to generate reports. The WISE system has Intranet capabilities. Alameda County has their department manuals on-line.

CONCLUSIONS:

Even though the two counties I visited and our county are at different places in the implementation of the integrated job functions, eligibility and WTW meetings should be held to discuss cases, (i.e., case management, there are issues that are common to all three counties.

- Defining the role of the new employment services and benefits workers?
- Vacancies or anticipated vacancies in Medical units.

Many of the workers in our county, particularly the field Employment Specialists (ES) are still grappling with what their role is. What is expected of them? The challenges of case management are still new. Many of the ESs are emphasizing the eligibility parts of the job because that is what they feel comfortable doing.

The IESS workers in San Mateo County are now more confident in their case management positions. However, one entire unit of workers expressed to me that if I had spoken with them nine months ago, I would have found them discouraged, stressed out and confused about what was expected of them. This entire unit went through group counseling that focused on worker burn out, their new roles as IESSs and learning how to disassociate themselves from their client's problems. Case management is now their primary focus. At this point in time, the workers in this unit are excited and energized with their jobs. They have been successful at helping participants become self-sufficient.

Recommendation:

Supervisors in the field units need to be working with and monitoring their workers' case management. Supervisors should monitor caseload distribution to make sure workload is evenly distributed. One worker should not have a majority of two parent cases or cases with earned income. Bi-weekly meetings should be held to discuss cases) i.e., What works, what doesn't). They should share their successes and the methods of organization or interviewing that is working for them.

In time. I believe our workers will have the same experience as the San Mateo workers did. Quality case management is a product of time and experience. I believe our workers will grow into their roles.

The vacancies in the Medical units, the uncovered cases, training and staffing problems that accompany these vacancies are another common issue. Recommendation: I suggest that within the various units, the supervisors should bank QMB and adult cases. Coverage to these cases should be minimal and can be provided either by assigning to workers responsibility for coverage of parts of the alphabet or simply worker of the day coverage. This recommendation is problematic because the workers are left with the more difficult cases. In order to minimize the impact of banking the QMB and adult cases, the Medical supervisors should monitor caseload distribution. One case might have seven Medical Family Budget Units (MFBUs) which show up on the CDS 608s at a count of seven, but it is only one case. Caseload distribution should be done on the bases of how many actual cases the worker has responsibility for, not the number of active MFBUs.

The supervisor should also monitor caseload distribution to make sure the number of MFBUs is also evenly distributed. One worker should not have 200 cases and 500 MFBUs while another worker has 200 cases with 250 MFBUs. Long term, the new workers we have hired will mature and be able to carry more cases which will solve some of the problems.

Service Delivery Model Recommendations:

In seeking solutions to our Service Delivery Model issues, the one question I would urge us to ask ourselves is "Are we happy with the continuity of the worker-participant relationship that is a product of our current model?" A participant will routinely see the Pre-Assessment Employment Specialist, the Job Club/ Job Search Employment Specialist and a Senior Employment Specialist at Assessment before being transferred to the Post-Assessment Employment Specialist who will do the on-going case management. If the Post-Assessment Employment Specialists have full caseloads, that participant is transferred to a Benefits Specialist before being assigned finally to the Post-Assessment Employment Specialist. Each time the participant is transferred they must establish a working relationship with their new worker. Does this model really provide the best worker/participant relationship for our participants?

Recommendation:

I recommend a change to our Service Delivery Model. I suggest we have Benefit Specialists who do the CalWORKS eligibility intake for all CalWORKS applicants. The intake Benefits Specialist would make the Diversion decisions and refer appropriate participants to Orientation where an Employment Specialist assigned to Orientation would outline for the participant the mandatory Welfare to Work activities. Once eligibility is completely determined and the case is approved, participants who have a Welfare to Work participation requirement should be transferred to the Employment Specialist who will be responsible for benefits and WTW requirements. Job Club/Job Search should be a specialized ES assignment. I recommend that we keep the assessment and intensive services processes as they are. This model solves two problems: continuity of worker/participant relationship and the length of time a case is in pre-assessment. San Francisco County has a model similar to the one I recommend. Their Employment Specialists have a caseload standard of 60.

If, we are content with the service delivery model we do have, there are some things we can do to make the model more efficient. Recommendations include:

- We should specialize the Job Club/Job Search assignments. Two of our district offices have already specialized the Job Club/Job Search assignments. The other two district offices rotate this assignment among the pre-assessment ES staff.
- The Job Club/Job Search specialized Employment Specialists should issue the transportation ancillary payments while the participant is in JobClub/Job Search.
- I would caution against transferring the case to Post Assessment too quickly. While this solution will solve the Pre-Assessment case-carrying problem, I believe it will create more problems in Post-Assessment. Transferring the case prior to Job Club/ Job Search places the no-show and non-compliance problems on the PostAssessment workers who are already having difficulties managing their caseloads.
- I recommend the Hercules expeditor model. All approved cases that are scheduled for Job Club are transferred to the expeditors. The two expeditors handle the case after the appraisal through the JobClub/Job Search process. The expeditors do all the Orientations. This pilot is working in the Hercules office. Recommendations common
- We need to increase our use of modern technology to reduce the amount of paper, to expedite communications, and interface the systems we use. I recommend we look more closely at the San Mateo SMART system and see if we can adapt it to our county. SMART meets our need to interface CDS, GIS and JTA. SMART has on- line documentation that can be accessed by all workers working with the family.
- The Intranet concept with on-line manuals is time effective. I recommend we proceed with putting our department manuals on-line. We should still route two hard copies to each unit. One for the supervisor's master unit hard copy and one to route to all workers as a heads up for changes. The changes should then be reviewed at a unit meeting. This process will save paper, clerical time for distribution and worker filing time. The on-line manuals expedite the transmission of new information.
- We should bar code our status reports and automate the suspend process.
- We should continue to lobby at the state and federal level for program simplification.
- I recommend continued emphasis on the broader team theme. Everywhere I visited people said a team approach is necessary for successful participant work placement. The team is no longer limited to the unit to which a worker is assigned. The team is every worker who is involved with the participant. We can broaden our team concept by offering additional staff development training to reinforce this concept combined with team meetings within the districts. I suggest the team meeting be comprised of ESs, SESs and their supervisors who are working with common participants. Structured team meetings in the districts will also

help with worker burn out by providing workers a forum to share common problems and solutions.

We must continue to be flexible and open to new ideas as we move forward with the mandates of the TANF and CalWORKS legislation.