

INTEGRATING CALWORKS AND JTPA PROGRAMS IN THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY HUMAN RESOURCES AGENCY (HRA)

Maureen Lewis*

INTRODUCTION

My objective with my BASSC project was to look at the integration of services provided to TANF recipients under the CalWORKS and JTPA programs in another county, and consider how we might provide more flexibility from a service delivery prospective dealing with the different funding streams of those two programs. I completed my internship in Santa Cruz County. Because my background is in the fiscal arena, I really wanted to get a better sense of how client services are delivered in another county, and hopefully obtain a better understanding of program related issues in my county.

WELFARE REFORM

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKS) program was implemented on January 1, 1998. This program replaced the former Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and the Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) program with a single, integrated, employment focused program and was the most radical change in state welfare policy in 60 years. CalWORKS is a time-limited assistance program, and carries strong work participation mandates. For this reason, it is important that we understand the potential barriers to obtaining and retaining employment that leads to a client's self-sufficiency in order to avoid facing penalties. Additionally, it is essential that we design programs that offer an array of services that will lead to employment and self-sufficiency.

I began my research by attending orientation sessions for both CalWORKS intake and JTPA. At the CalWORKS orientation session, clients are given information about what programs and services are available to them, and they receive similar information at the JTPA orientation. I was struck at the orientation session by how the focus of the message being relayed to the clients was getting themselves into a position where they were able to successfully obtain employment. This did not look or feel like an entitlement program. The clear message was that these programs were available to provide short-term assistance and the expectation was that those receiving benefits prepare themselves for work. Attending the orientation sessions was good place for me to start. It made me begin to think about what we are really trying to accomplish as an agency-to see the success of the client. Not only does helping clients achieve self-sufficiency eliminate their reliance on public assistance, but it does wonderful things for their self-esteem. It also made me appreciate that what may be our policy as an agency, may not be what best suits the needs of the person receiving services.

In addition to attending the orientation sessions, I attended various management and program meetings to try to get a sense of culture of the Santa Cruz HRA. I attended the local Job Training Task Force meeting, a committee comprised of Board members, local business leaders, HRA staff, community colleges and others who discuss strategies for dealing with problems that the County faces, such as pockets or populations with barriers. The Task force is also charged to

* Maureen Lewis is an accountant in the Department of Human Services of the Fiscal Division of Sonoma County.

identify major issues and gaps, including what populations have not been served or have been under served.

REORGANIZATION

The HRA is currently in the process of reorganizing its CareerWorks division, which includes JTPA, CalWORKS and the ChildCare units. The reorganization of the Employment and Training Division will be complete by July 1999; however, HRA is taking immediate action to integrate staff and services now. The new Employment and Training Division will fully integrate HRA employment services at all levels and enable the county to collaborate in order to integrate services both internally and with the larger community. Santa Cruz integrated service delivery system is based on the One Stop Career Center vision of seamless employment services and the following principles:

- Universal access to core services, regardless of program eligibility, performance standards and funding targets
- Greater customer service
- A holistic, family focused, case-conferencing model
- Provision of a single case manager to coordinate employment services and serve as the primary contact person for the job seeker

WATSONVILLE ONE STOP

The pride and joy, if you will, of the newly formed Employment and Training Division is the One Stop Center in Watsonville, called WorkForce Santa Cruz. The WorkForce center is a place that anyone can go to access employment services. It is not limited to just Welfare to Work or JTPA participants. At the One Stop Center, HRA staff are co-located with other agencies including:

- CalWORKS
- Career Works (JTPA)
- Employment Development Department
- Cabrillo College
- Adult Education
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Regional Occupational Programs
- Senior Employment - AARP

Clients visiting the center have access to a wide array of services including:

- Job Search Skills
- Computer training
- Vocational Counseling

- Resume Workshops
- Job Leads
- Interview skills
- Works Experience Opportunities

In the WorkForce Resource Library, clients have access to computers where they are able to job search on the Internet, or seek help with resume writing. There are printers: copy machines and daily newspapers are provided so that clients may search for current employment opportunities. There is a wide assortment of books and videos available to those visiting the center. I observed that most of the clients at the center were using the computers to access the Internet or work on resume writing.

Also located at the WorkForce center is a Network Center. The Network Center offers telephones for clients to use for their job search calls, and a message center for potential employers to leave messages for those without telephones at home (this can be vital for those job seekers who are homeless). Job opportunities are also posted on a bulletin board. Fax machines, copiers, and printers are provided. The goal of the WorkForce center is to provide a seamless service system designed to meet the needs of a broad range of individual clients of varied backgrounds, ages, skill levels and financial situations. The clients using the center include long-term unemployed, welfare recipients, new labor market entrants, students, seasonal workers, recently dislocated workers, veterans and already employed workers. Some have serious barriers to finding employment due to disabilities, behavioral health issues or lack of education and/or language skills.

FUNDING ISSUES

Ideally, having the systems appear seamless to the client is the desired goal. From the clients prospective, the programs at times seem fragmented, duplicative and difficult to use. The reason for much of the fragmentation is the funding streams of these programs. Until we are given a system that provides us with the desired flexibility, it is incumbent upon the county to develop it's own models that work with their service delivery systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SONOMA COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

- Re-examine current claiming methodologies: Include all Human Services Department staff the Administrative Expense claim process. Use the time study as a basis for allocating all nondirect costs which will allow management to have far more flexibility in designing and making changes to service delivery models.
- Improve communication between program and fiscal staff: It became clear to me in the 15 days that I spent on my internship that I know far too little about how services are delivered and what services are available to our clients. In order to fully maximize resources it is critical for fiscal staff to become more involved.

CONCLUSION

Welfare reform has fundamentally changed the services that our agency provides to the community. The success of our agency is determined by the success of those that we serve. It is essential that we maintain a positive presence in the community, engage employers, business leaders, community colleges, childcare providers and school districts. We can achieve success if we all work together.