

## **INTEGRATING CALWORKS AND THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT PROGRAMS**

**Sherry Alderman\***

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

I am interested in service delivery models and how to provide the best program possible to meet the needs of our clients. Santa Cruz County graciously provided the opportunity to study, observe and learn about how they have integrated their CalWORKs and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs. My internship looked at Santa Cruz County's CareerWorks and Benefit Services Divisions, with a focus on:

- Service Delivery and Organizational Structure
- Funding
- Information Systems

I was able to visit two of the Career Centers and one of the CalWORKs Benefit Services offices. Visits to the offices in Santa Cruz and Watsonville included office tours, interviews with various staff members, observations of clients being served, and attending a management meeting.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

I submit three recommendations to Sonoma County:

1. Sonoma County form a workgroup to look at ways to co-enroll eligible CalWORKs clients into WIA. I would suggest that employment and training counselors from both Job Link and SonomaWORKS as well as employment and training specialists be represented on the workgroup. I would be happy to facilitate this work-

group and develop a plan on how to accomplish the co-enrollment process.

2. Sonoma County adopt a financial report similar to the CareerWorks Financial Report used in Santa Cruz County and that all of the employment and training management team members are included in a monthly distribution of the report. My experience in Sonoma County is in the eligibility and service arenas. Since the funding structure that existed in the AFDC and GAIN programs changed with the implementation of CalWORKs, I had to learn how CalWORKs is funded. Since WIA is part of our division, I also needed to learn about that funding structure. Understanding how a program is funded is essential to the program's successful operation.
3. Sonoma County develop a compatible information system to be used in conjunction with GIS until we implement the CalWIN system statewide in 2003. This is not a new recommendation. Our Information Systems staff has started to work on developing a database using information I brought back from Santa Cruz as well as from other database models.

#### **CONCLUSION**

My internship with Santa Cruz County provided me with an opportunity to look "inside" another county's Human Services Department. Although our service delivery models take different approaches, the

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goal is the same: running an effective, efficient program that meets Federal and state mandates, while being flexible enough to meet the needs of the clients and community.

## **INTEGRATING CALWORKS AND THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT PROGRAMS**

**Sherry Alderman**

### **INTRODUCTION**

As a Program Planner and Evaluation Analyst for the SonomaWORKS program in Sonoma County, I am interested in service delivery models and how to provide the best program possible to suit the needs of our clients while being fiscally responsible. In Sonoma County, our Employment and Training Division includes the CalWORKs and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs. For my Bay Area Social Services Consortium (BASSC) project, I wanted to study how another county had integrated their CalWORKs and WIA programs. The County of Santa Cruz Human Resource Agency graciously allowed me the opportunity to complete my internship in their county.

### **BACKGROUND**

The County of Santa Cruz Human Resources Agency is one of the largest public agencies in Santa Cruz County. Their department's mission is to strive to strengthen families by assuring safety, promoting self-sufficiency, eliminating poverty, and improving the quality of life in the community while serving children, youth, and families as well as individuals who may be job seekers, veterans, disabled, medically uninsured, abused or neglected, vulnerable or frail, or in need of support. The department values compassion, partnership and excellence.

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of my BASSC internship was to study how Santa Cruz County has integrated their WIA and CalWORKs programs. I specifically wanted to

learn about their service delivery model and the funding structure of their CalWORKs and WIA programs.

In order to learn about Santa Cruz's service delivery model and funding structure, I looked at their Benefit Services and CareerWorks Divisions. The Benefit Services Division provides financial assistance, employment services, nutritional supportive services, and access to medical care for low-income families and individuals. The division's programs include:

- CalWORKs
- Medi-Cal
- General Assistance
- Food Stamps, and
- Veteran's Services.

These services are mandated and provided throughout the county.

The CareerWorks Division implements workforce development policies and programs. The programs enable Santa Cruz County residents to build the skills needed to secure and maintain employment at self-sufficient wage and maintain benefits in the local and regional labor markets. The division's mission is to build employment, economic prosperity and family well-being within the community by co-locating services at career centers. Career centers are located in Santa Cruz, Watsonville and Capitola. The career centers provide comprehensive employment, training, education, and economic development services. They also provide assistance with skill upgrades and career changes. Computer training labs are available on-site.

I was able to visit the career centers in Watsonville as well as Santa Cruz. I also visited the Santa Cruz Benefit Services office. Visits in these offices included office tours, interviews with various staff members, observations of clients being served, and attending a management meeting.

This case study examines the following areas as they relate to the integration of WIA and CalWORKs: a) Service Delivery and Organizational Structure, b) Funding, c) Information Systems.

Some of the information I gathered could benefit Sonoma County. I will make recommendations for Sonoma County at the end of this case study.

### **SERVICE DELIVERY AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

With the advent of Welfare Reform, Santa Cruz County formed a Workforce Development Service Delivery System Restructuring committee. This committee was given the task of designing an integrated agency workforce development service delivery system that would serve both the job seeker and the employer utilizing the One Stop center concept. Several workgroups were established to look at assessment/front door design, job search/job development, skills training, supportive services and retention services. The service delivery model adopted by Santa Cruz County is detailed in the flowchart labeled Attachment A located at the end of this case study.

Applicants applying for CalWORKs attend a program orientation and meet with an eligibility worker from the Benefits Services Division. The eligibility worker determines the applicant's eligibility for assistance. If the client is subject to CalWORKs

work requirements, the case is transitioned into CareerWorks.

In CareerWorks, CalWORKs clients work with an eligibility worker and an employment specialist. The employment specialist works with the client to develop and support the client's employment and/or training goals. Based on these goals, a welfare to work plan is developed. The client may also be assigned a Social Worker who assists the client with behavioral issues. The employment specialist also evaluates the client's eligibility for the WIA program. If the client is eligible for WIA, they are co-enrolled in both CalWORKs and WIA. This allows for maximizing funding sources.

Individuals registering for the WIA program enter the program by attending a career center orientation and completing a WIA intake application and interview conducted by an employment specialist. After completing the in-take assessment, an individual employment plan is developed with the client. As the client (whether in CalWORKs or WIA) continues to work toward their plan goals, the eligibility worker and/or employment specialist provide the client with ongoing guidance and support.

### **FINANCIAL REPORTS**

One of my objectives was to learn more about the funding structure of the CalWORKs and WIA programs. I was able to interview both fiscal and program managers. One key tool I noticed all of the managers referred to or had close-at-hand at their desks was their copy of the CareerWorks Financial Report (Financial Report). In addition to the managers' comments about the financial report, I observed a meeting where some decisions were made based upon the information in the report.

The Financial Report is printed each month and distributed to all of the CareerWorks fiscal and program managers. The report is bound and easy to read and use. The contents of the report include:

- Allocation Summary
- Enrollments
- Contract Summary
- Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Administration
- WIA Participant Tracking
- WIA Youth
- CalWORKs Youth
- Welfare to Work
- State Match Funds
- Monthly Expenditure Reports

The report allows for prompt budget and program evaluation. This evaluation may lead to the shifting of funds or changes in how programs are targeted or marketed. The Financial Report also allows the programs to operate in a fiscally responsible manner.

### **INFORMATION SYSTEMS**

Santa Cruz County stores their client welfare to work information in the GAIN Information System (GIS). Many other counties, including Sonoma, use the same system. As the name implies, GIS was built for the Greater Avenues to Independence (GAIN) program. CalWORKs replaced the GAIN program. This meant that the GIS system has been “patched” for the data/program requirements of CalWORKs.

To mitigate the problems with the system, Santa Cruz County maintains minimal client information in GIS. Other essential client information is maintained in a formatted database. The database has ad hoc capabilities and is more user-friendly than GIS. Since it is more user-friendly, staff may be more

inclined to enter current, accurate information. The information in the database can provide management with better data to be used in developing program policy.

### **IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SONOMA COUNTY**

There are several recommendations I am making based upon my experience in Santa Cruz County.

1. Sonoma County could form a workgroup to look at ways to co-enroll eligible CalWORKs clients into WIA. I suggest that employment and training counselors from both Job Link and SonomaWORKS and employment and training specialists be represented on the workgroup. I would be happy to facilitate this workgroup and develop a plan on how to accomplish the co-enrollment process.
2. Sonoma County adopt a financial report similar to the CareerWorks Financial Report used in Santa Cruz County and that all of the employment and training management team members are included in a monthly distribution of the report. My experience in Sonoma County is in the eligibility and service arenas. Since the funding structure that existed in the AFDC and GAIN programs changed with the implementation of CalWORKs, I had to learn how CalWORKs is funded. Since WIA is part of our division, I also needed to learn about that funding structure. Understanding how a program is funded is essential to the program's successful operation.
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mation I brought back from Santa Cruz as well as from other database models.

### **CONCLUSION**

My internship with Santa Cruz County provided me with an opportunity to look “inside” another county’s Human Services Department. Although our service delivery models take different approaches, the goal is the same... running an effective, efficient program that meets federal and state mandates, while being flexible enough to meet the needs of the clients and community.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to sincerely thank the incredible staff of the County of Santa Cruz Human Resources Agency who gave of their knowledge and time. With your help, I had a wonderful BASSC experience.

Attachment A

CareerWorks - Core Services Program Flow



