

Santa Clara County's Employment Services One Worker Concept for Child Care and Case Management

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Human services programs across California have been severely impacted by funding and staffing reductions while simultaneously experiencing increased workloads. As such, Contra Costa County is continually seeking and promoting new and different approaches to expedite the processing of applications and managing caseloads as a way to continue providing excellent customer service to its community.

Santa Clara County has successfully managed

its integrated employment and child care services model for more than twenty years, despite the many challenges that arise when faced with funding, staffing, and other resource deficits. With that in mind, I chose to study Santa Clara County's Employment Services One Worker Concept for Child Care and Case Management to determine and compare the effectiveness of a Welfare-to-Work program that performs integrated case management.

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Introduction

This paper outlines and evaluates the concept of assigning only one worker to child care and employment services case management, a model within the Santa Clara County Employment Services division that has proven effective in increasing casework efficiencies, and consequently supporting their efforts to meet the work participation rates mandated by the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program known as CalWORKs in California.

Doing more with less seems to be the new normal for many social services agencies, and the Contra Costa County Employment and Human and Services Department (EHSD) is no exception. State funding has not kept up with the rising demand for social services, making it more challenging for counties to meet the demand for services. Contra Costa County EHSD lost a significant number of staffing positions in Program Year (PY) 2008-09, and until recently was in a hard hiring freeze. Over the last five years, during the crux of the recent recession, Contra Costa County had to deal with major budget deficits due to continued declines in tax revenues, skyrocketing unemployment rates, and underfunding from the state while simultaneously experiencing increased caseloads resulting from a surge in applications for basic assistance, including CalFresh, CalWORKs, General Assistance, and Medi-Cal. Any changes that could increase efficiencies, as well as increase the Work Participation Rate (WPR) upon which funding is based, should be explored.

Contra Costa County's mission is to, in partnership with its community, provide services that support and protect adults, children, families, and the elderly, and promote personal responsibility, independence, and self-sufficiency. As such, Contra Costa County is continually seeking and promoting new and different approaches to expedite the processing of applications, managing caseloads, and meeting the needs of its community. Similarly, Santa Clara County's mission is to provide high quality, professional, financial, and protective services to residents of its county. Moreover, also similar to Contra Costa County, Santa Clara County has a large and diverse ethnic population of residents, and is also one of California's largest county government social services agencies. Santa Clara County's one worker case management model may be an approach that would benefit Contra Costa County.

The Model

Although some counties are starting to see caseloads decrease as the economy begins to slowly recover from the recession, there is still an undeniable need for services. For Program Year 2012, Santa Clara County provided CalWORKs services monthly to an average of 6,806 adults and more than 26,000 children; assisted 101,750 CalFresh persons; provided employment support services to 4,486 recipients; and supported an average total of 231,892 individuals with health insurance through Medi-Cal. The current CalWORKs caseload for Santa Clara is well

over 13,000, of which 6,370 families are required to enroll with Employment Services.

Currently, states are required to meet a minimum Work Participation Rate (WPR) of 50% for all CalWORKs single families, and 90% of all CalWORKs two-parent families engaged in employment services and meeting other work participation requirements. For more than twenty years, Santa Clara County staff have been providing integrated Stage I child care and employment services to its CalWORKs families. It is apparent that Santa Clara's expertise and its integrated employment and child care services case management model have proven effective in supporting its efforts to effectively keep participants engaged, and to meet TANF WPR program requirements. In December 2012, Santa Clara achieved an all-time high monthly WPR rate of 58.93%.

EMPLOYMENT & CHILD CARE INTAKE CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Employment services are the springboard for CalWORKs families to leap toward becoming self-sufficient. No matter how far the climb is for families to reach the top, counties do their best to assist, encourage, and support families through their journey. Santa Clara County's one worker concept is one approach used to provide comprehensive employment and child care supportive services that supports CalWORKs families with achieving this goal.

Santa Clara County's Employment and Benefit Services division is composed of both Intake and Continuing integrated child care and employment services case management units. Santa Clara has two units of workers designated to provide integrated intake services for both employment services and Stage I child care. Between the two units there is a total of twenty Intake Employment Counselors assigned to employment and child care intake. Some of the primary responsibilities of Santa Clara County's Intake Employment Counselors include:

- Conducting group and one-on-one employment services orientations

- Conducting one-on-one appraisals for assignment to an appropriate employment services activity, including necessary supportive services
- Processing transportation and ancillary payments
- Processing child care applications and payments

Santa Clara's Intake units are currently processing an average of 26 intakes per week. At this time, Santa Clara has not implemented application intake targets for their Employment Services Counselors. The need for child care and other supportive services is identified during the intake/appraisal, and is revised/updated during continuing case management based on client needs and circumstances. Less than 50% of Santa Clara County's applicants identify a need for child care supportive services during their intake appointment. When the need for child care is identified, the assigned intake worker will process an individual's child care application if the case has not yet been transferred to a Continuing Employment Services unit. Otherwise, the child care request and application will be processed by the assigned Continuing Employment Services unit. To ensure client engagement, the case will remain with the Intake Employment Services Counselor until the individual is engaged and successfully completes a full day of their assigned employment services activity.

Contra Costa County's current Office of the Future intake model only includes integration of its CalWORKs, CalFresh, and Medi-Cal benefit programs. The employment services and Stage I child care services are not currently integrated, which brings about challenges with maintaining continuity between these two programs, particularly with Stage I child care being a critical supportive service component of Welfare-to-Work (WTW) employment services.

EMPLOYMENT & CHILD CARE CONTINUING CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Upon successfully engaging an individual into employment services, the case is transferred to an integrated Employment and Child Care Continuing unit for ongoing case management services.

Santa Clara has seven Continuing units performing integrated employment services and Stage I child care case management. One of Santa Clara's Continuing Employment Services units is designated for Retention Services, and assigned to provide case management to individuals who are transitioning off CalWORKs cash assistance and over to the Stage II child care program, which is administered by local Alternative Payment Provider (APP) agencies.

Some of the primary responsibilities of Santa Clara County's Continuing Case Management units of Employment Counselors include:

- Managing and monitoring ongoing employment services activities
- Amending Welfare-to-Work plans
- Managing and monitoring on-going Stage I child care service needs
- Processing new requests and applications for child care services

Between both its Intake and Continuing units, including management, supervisors, and support staff, Santa Clara County has 194 positions dedicated to integrated employment and child care case management services. Employment Counselors go through a six-month comprehensive employment services and child care training program. Santa Clara County Employment Counselors do not have a set number for caseload targets, but are currently averaging 50 cases per worker. Employment Counselors are responsible for closely monitoring their caseloads using a Performance Building Detail (PBD) Report, which identifies for the worker individuals who have past due case actions. This report is used as a tool to assist the worker in measuring their case management performance. Unit supervisors also review the PBD Report to provide case management guidance to their staff.

CHALLENGES, DISCOVERIES, SUCCESSES

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Information Network (CalWIN) is used to administer Santa Clara County's Stage I child care program, whereas Contra Costa has a two-pronged

approach for child care case management. Contra Costa uses CalWIN to manage Employment Services, but a secondary case management system, CARES, is used to administer its Stage I child care program.

Utilizing the same system (CalWIN) to provide both employment and child care case management services is one way in which Santa Clara is effectively administering their integrated Employment Services and Stage I child care programs. CalWIN allows the user to perform the integrated function of employment and child care services, which saves time and money by decreasing the duplication of work and services, overpayments, and fraud. However, challenges do occur with the processing of child care services, particularly as it relates to establishing child care services for families who choose multiple child care providers. These types of situations, although uncommon, require a significant amount of review and processing time for Intake and Continuing unit workers.

Santa Clara continues the model of integrated employment and child care services by meeting weekly with their local APP agencies to support individuals who are transitioning to Stage II child care services and, after 24 months, to Stage III child care services.

Santa Clara County has a very strong working relationship with its APP collaborative partners, meeting weekly to ensure all agencies are providing consistent community messaging and services relative to all three stages of child care services. Child care supportive services are a key component to self-sufficiency, and Santa Clara's integrated employment and child care case management services supports this goal. Despite the challenges that may arise when demand for services increases, for more than twenty years Santa Clara County has successfully managed its integrated employment and child care services one worker concept.

In discussions with Santa Clara staff, they indicated their ability to better service clients through integrated employment and child care services because it saves time and allows them to provide

more comprehensive supportive services. Staff also indicated that the integrated employment and child care services model allows them to expeditiously address child care needs and get clients engaged in WTW activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

Because of the obvious differences in how Santa Clara administers its Stage I child care and Employment Services programs compared to Contra Costa County, it might not be entirely feasible to replicate their model exactly. However, with the recent implementation of integrating our Stage I child care units into the WTW division, utilizing Santa Clara County's integrated model, or a hybrid version, could further enhance our ability to improve customer service. Additionally, worker and customer interface would be improved, client services and client engagement into WTW activities would be expedited, and our existing process for soliciting and receiving client information would be streamlined, resulting in minimizing duplication of efforts and a cost savings.

There are some significant functions of Santa Clara County's one worker model that should be further explored:

- Using CalWIN for both employment and child care case management services as a cost savings measure
- Piloting one worker integrated employment and child care services during the early part of next program year in order to assess its effectiveness and impact on client engagement for Contra Costa County
- Cross-training Employment Services workers on child care as a way to add greater staff utility for processing child care applications
- Developing a comprehensive employment services training program for child care and WTW staff, similar to Contra Costa County's Eligibility Worker Training Unit (EWTU) model

The implementation of an integrated employment and child care services model is very likely to be

achievable by Contra Costa County, but not without challenges that include the need for:

- System updates
- Labor discussions
- Benefit analysis
- Staff Development resources, which are currently dedicated to the EWTU and other mandatory trainings
- Integration with the current Office of the Future intake model

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