

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

Nancy Forrest*

Among all the world's races, some obscure Bedouin tribes possibly apart, Americans are the most prone to misinformation. This is not the consequence of any special preference for mendacity, although at the higher levels of their public administration that tendency is impressive. It is rather that so much of what they themselves believe is wrong.¹

John Galbraith

INTRODUCTION

Most organizations have a vast number of policies, procedures, instructions, manuals, memos, and reports. Napa County is no exception, although we are considered a small rural county. With the arrival of SAWS (State Automated Welfare System for Public Assistance) and CWS/CMS (Child Welfare Services Case Management System); these computer systems spew out mountains of information with high-speed printers producing more than we can read.

In the past century, we as a nation moved from information underload to overload. Everybody has trouble keeping up. People in business, especially government have less time and more technical literature and administrative documents to understand. We continually hear the complaint, "I can't keep up with this paperwork," or due to the arrival of e-

mail, "I'm getting 30 - 40 messages a day, it takes me hours to read them."

In recent years, Napa County has become what could be termed as a "Super Agency." We have gone through several "re-organizations" that have resulted in the integration of services. This has allowed us to co-locate staff and the supervision of staff agency wide. For example, our Comprehensive Services for Older Adults Section includes staff from Mental Health, Adult Services, IHSS, Eligibility, and Public Health. The Public Health Nurse supervises the Eligibility Staff.

With the recent changes due to Welfare Reform we have, forged partnerships with community based organizations, the schools, and businesses to address the issue of how to effectively serve our clientele. Welfare Reform as also brought with it many new regulations that have an impact on the community as a whole. For example, verification of school attendance has had a direct impact on the schools (increase in workload at the attendance office). Other regulations have required that Eligibility Staff work more directly with Child Welfare Social Service Staff and with Public Health Nurses.

DILEMMA

"Information, its communication and use, is the

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¹John Kenneth Galbraith (b. 1908), U.S. economist. "The United States," in *New York* (15 Nov. 1971; repr. in *A View from the Stands*, 1986).

web of society; the basis for all human understanding, organization and effort”

John Diebold

With these partnerships and the integration of our agency, we find ourselves sharing even more information than before. New program regulations and the policy calls needed to implement them have to be done quickly and effectively. However, the “interpretations” of them are being changed by the State on a daily basis. The problem that arises, is the need to develop new and better ways to communicate and to manage the informational flow within the agency and within the community.

To address all these problems would be a surmountable task. My efforts have concentrated on the flow of information within the agency. I will leave the issue of communication to the community to the Public Relations experts.

EXPERIENCE

As a Staff Analyst, I am responsible for training and analyzing state material for various Public Assistance Programs (e.g., CalWorks Food Stamp, MediCal, and the County MediCal Service Program). I maintain of the Eligibility Division’s Policy and Procedures Manual. Integration has hit me as well. I was recently assigned to develop a Policy and Procedures Manual for Child Welfare Services. This was a direct result of implementing the CWS/CMS system. As you can see, the dissemination of information has quite an impact on me. Diane Edwards, the Director of Sonoma County Human Services Department, made her staff available so that I could complete my project.

A week before my project was to start I went to an orientation. Tom Babcock from Staff Development presented a summary of the County’s demographics, maps, a tour of the facilities and copies of the Administrative Procedures Manual to Jim Lockwood another BASSC participant, and myself. Diane Edwards welcomed us we talked briefly about our projects. That first day I met briefly with my facilitator, Carol Bauer, the Division Director for the Family, Youth and Children’s Division. We discussed the training plan that they have for newly hired Social Workers. Newly hired staff receive an Orientation including site visits and in-house staff provide training on CWS/CMS. The plan is comprehensive and is something I feel Napa County should review (Attachment 1).

A week later, I arrived at Sonoma County’s Family, Youth, and Children’s Division. I met with Marion Deeds who is the Division’s Planner Analyst. Marion and I have worked together in the past, on training projects. It was enjoyable being able to relate to someone in the same position as me. Marion and I discussed the meetings I would attend and the individuals that I would interview.

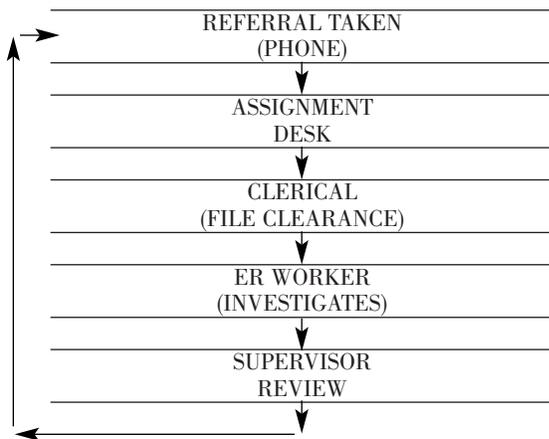
Sonoma County has a population of about 465,000, which is roughly three times that of Napa. The Family and Youth Division include:

- 74 Social Workers
- 4 Case aids
- 4 Managers
- 10 Social Work Supervisors
- 11 Clerical Staff
- 2 Clerical Supervisors
- 4 Social Workers who are out-stationed as part of their school-based program²

² These positions are intended to augment and interface with other community based projects such as Healthy Start and Family Preservation

In addition, they manage a 24-hour emergency juvenile shelter, Valley of the Moon Children's Home. Valley of the Moon employs Youth Supervisors and two Clerical staff persons. The Division is responsible for staffing the Redwood Children's Center, a sexual assault examination and investigation center.

They have three Emergency Response Units. One unit is dedicated to telephone intake, and the other two units do field investigations. They have one full unit of voluntary FM workers. A special unit called Court Services files the petitions and investigates allegations on the children who were brought to Valley of the Moon Children's Home. This unit has a court officer who represents them in court. This Division is responsible for about 1,300 cases and takes approximately 12,000 call per year. Vaughn Walker a Social Worker was my tour guide. He is responsible for assisting staff in the use of CWS/CMS and is working on a CWS/CMS user's guide. He is also responsible for the supervision of their clerical staff. We discussed the trials and tribulations of implementing a new computer system. His clerical staff play an intricate role in CWS/CMS. The flow they have developed works well.



NOTE: if case is to be evaluated out then it is referred to clerical to input into CWS, then to Supervisor to approve. If action is taken ER worker enters into CWS.

The division is made up of a remarkable group of individuals. I was able to see them work together and found that they indeed live up to their mission statement.

Over the two week span that I was in Sonoma I meet with the following individuals:

- Sherri Alderman, a Planner Analyst for CalWorks in the Income Maintenance Division. Her duties include writing the CalWorks Policy and Procedures Manual, evaluating state material for CalWorks, and training in CalWorks. She has developed an Eligibility Handbook that she maintains and updates for staff.
- Roy Redilch, a Planner Analyst Welfare Reform. He helped to design the SonomaWorks Plan for Sonoma County. He also proposed an Information & Referral Automation Project. This proposal took six months to go from the drawing board to approval. This was a collaborative effort that included staff from MIS, the Volunteer Center, Family and Children's Services, Adult Services and Job Training.
- Mary Varley, a Planner Analyst for Administration. She is responsible for writing the SonomaWorks Plan and the departments Policy and Procedures Manual. Currently, she is redesigning the department's manuals to incorporate the principle of Information Mapping.

LESSONS LEARNED

“Large meetings are often used to share the blame”

Paul Foley

This quotation does not reflect the group dynamics of the meetings I attended in Sonoma County. I sat in on a Staff meeting, a Supervisor & Management meeting, an Architecture meeting, and a Unit meeting Joint Labor Management Committee (JLMC) meeting. The creation of the JLMC has allowed staff to participate more actively in the decision making process.

These meetings were run efficiently, and effectively. Each meeting was run in the same matter regardless of the participants. Participation was encouraged and all those involved were able to express their issues or concerns in a nurturing environment. There were no repercussions against an individual if an assignment that was due did not materialize. Upon further research, I learned that this did not happen overnight. Sonoma County identified that meetings were fraught with conflict. The most rapidly growing technique for handling differences is bargaining or negotiation. Therefore, Sonoma County decided to offer training in conflict resolution and negotiation strategy. They also formalized the meeting process. Each meeting has an agenda, a facilitator, and a recorder.

Sonoma County has a formal process for how information is disseminated. There is a Planner Analyst assigned to different divisions and they work closely with the Division Managers. However, they are responsible for reviewing information, making rec-

ommendations and relaying it to staff. They sometimes meet with other Planner Analysts from different Divisions to discuss the implications to the department. At times they may determine that a work group is needed to tackle a particular topic, and they solicit volunteers. If a policy decision is needed, the Analyst contacts the appropriate individual to make the decision. They then determine how the information is to be relayed (Attachment 2). The most important aspect of this model is that the stake holder's are appropriately identified and involved in the planning and implementation process. In this way the department shows that it values their judgment, contributions and hard work.

CONCLUSION

History has had many ages; the Age of Fire, Bronze Age, Ice Age, Stone Age, Iron Age, Dark Ages, Middle Ages, Age of Enlightenment, Age of Reason, Golden Age, Age of Aquarius, Machine Age, Computer Age, and Space Age³. Now we are in the Information Age.

According to Tom Peters⁴, information is knowledge and knowledge is power. Without power there is no action. Information motivates employees in several ways:

- It shows the worker that they are valued
- Allows for day-to day problem solving
- Prohibits delays in action

³*The Original Roget's Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases* (Americanized Version) is licensed from Longman Group UK Limited. Copyright © 1994 by Longman Group UK Limited. All rights reserved.

⁴ Peters, Tom, *Thriving of Chaos Handbook for Management Revolution*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York 1987

- Stirs the competitive juices - thereby allowing for creativity and new ideas
- Starts people talking and sharing and seeking improvements
- Shifts skill and responsibility to the front line
- Creation of a matrix organization (balance of power between managerial linking person and the regular line managers)⁵

Motivation aside, information is not always enough. Staff need to learn how to use the information they have. Training is a means by which staff can learn how to use the reports effectively. Information can be dissemination as regulations, policies or procedures. It could be in the form of statistical data, fiscal reports, caseload reports, or performance evaluations. Staff also need to have the information presented in a manner that is easily understood. Information Mapping is a design that allows the reader to quickly scan the material present.

I quoted Galbraith in the beginning because Sonoma County Human Services has effectively put into to place some of his ideas around organizational design. The Galbraith model is a lateral relations design which includes:

- Direct face to face contact between department heads
- Creation of liaison positions in each department
- Creation of task forces and teams
- Creation of integrator roles - facilitators
- Creation of managerial linking roles (people with power and authority)

In conclusion, participating in this project allowed me to network with individuals in the same position. It opened my eyes to the fact that those in my position face the same issues no matter where they work. A valuable lesson learned is that Napa County is not alone in experiencing the upheaval created by Welfare Reform or the implementation of CWS/CMS.

RECOMMENDATION

Napa County has always been at the forefront in allowing creativity with implementing new ideas and new ways of doing business. We need to stay in the forefront! WE CAN DO BETTER!

I recommend implementing a committee similar to the Join Labor Management Committee (JLMC). I think this could be modified to fit Napa's need. This will give staff the opportunity to address the various issues and or concerns they may have. Networking is the keystone for organizational growth. Considering the success of Future Search and the enthusiasm with which staff shared their ideas and problem solving skills this would be an effective outlet for staff.

The JLMC is a county wide committee that operates on two levels (1) individual department (2) county-wide that is mandated by the MOU. JLMC is a way for management and employees to solve problems without going through negotiations and procedures regarding issues in the department, that do not have an impact on the MOU. Some issues are referred to

⁵ Galbraith, Jay R., "Organization Design: An Information Process" Interfaces Vol. 4, No. 3 May 1974. Copyright 1974

the county committee. The JLMC has representatives in all offices. A form is available for staff to complete for issues to be brought to the committee (Attachment 3).

The last dying gasp of an organization is usually the issuance of an even larger procedure manual.

-Anonymous

As a result of working on this project, I took a long hard look at how Napa County shares information with staff. This is an area we could improve upon. I propose that we look to follow Sonoma County's method and adapt it to fit our needs. E-mail is an illustrative of this point. It is overused, to convey everything from regulation changes to system changes. I cannot help remembering that when we changed from CC-mail to Email, all that was lost. The way progress works, Email will be obsolete. One issue that I have faced as a trainer is the complaint from staff that information is given to them in so many different formats they have difficulty finding it when needed. I would strongly suggest that we address this issue. As noted previously without information there is inaction and in some cases negative reactions. Serving our client to the best of our ability has always been the heart of our county. How better to serve clientele? Then to have well-informed employees!

Taking a hard look at our Eligibility Policy and Procedure Manual and the drafts of our Children's Service Manual has led me to conclusion that instituting Information Mapping should be our next step. I believe we need to develop written documents that scan quickly as well as inform about detail. We must provide the maximum amount of

information in a minimum amount of time.

Information Mapping supports the ability of human beings to scan quickly through pieces of writing. All main points are visible instantly in the sub-heading and marginal labels. The main text is clearly subdivided and contains the supporting detail. It is often diagrammed graphically when that is a better form of presentation (Attachment 4). In the future will have all policy and procedures online. Acrobat, is currently available for Children's Services staff. Information Mapping will work well with Acrobat.

My next step is to "officially" make a proposal on these items. I also plan on doing a survey to staff regarding how effective they feel information is flowing through the agency.

⁶ Simmons, S.H. *"How to be the Life of the podium: openers, closures & everything in between to keep them listening"* American Management Association, New York, 1991.

ATTACHMENT 1

Orientation Outline

General	Department Mission Statement Publication Of Policies And Procedures Department Organization Chart Acting Director Assignments
Personnel	Employee Time Recording Overtime Leave With Pay Catastrophic Leave Leave Without Pay Promotions Sick Leave/Time Management Program Letter Of Recommendation & Employment/Work History Verification Request
Human Resources	Human Resources Requests For Educational Leave Employee Suggestion Award Program Committees And Work Teams
General	News Media Contact Building Management & Security Subpoenas
Personnel	Sales Of God And Services On Department Property Ethics General Personnel Guidelines Confidentiality Hiring, Orientation And Resignations Personnel Files
Systems	Overview Of Sexual Harassment Prevention System Security Policy Software Requests
Health & Safety	Safety Committee Medical Emergencies Accident Reporting Emergency Evacuation Plan Bomb Threat, Earthquake And Fire Safety Violence In The Workplace Potentially Dangerous Client Policy Injury And Illness Prevention Program Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan Exposure To Infectious Diseases Drug Free Workplace Smoking Policy Fragrance Policy Ergonomics

Sonoma County Human Services Department Administrative Manual

Section 1-1

Approved by Director:

Alexander M. Edwards

ATTACHMENT 2

PUBLICATION OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

I. Purpose

To provide guidelines for the methods of communicating departmental policies and procedures to employees of the Human Services Department.

II. General

There are three principal methods to communicate policies and procedures:

A. Department Administrative Manual

Contains general information which pertains to all employees in all divisions. It is divided into the following sections:

1. Section 1 - General
2. Section 5 - Records Management
3. Section 10 - Personnel
4. Section 15 - Health and Safety
5. Section 20 - Human Resource
6. Section 25 - Systems
7. Section 50 - General Assistance Procedure Manual

B. Department Operational Procedures

Contain program information and are issued under the appropriate division or program category.

1. Economic Assistance Handbooks

Include policies and procedures related to the Economic Assistance Programs (such as AFDC, Medi-Cal, CMSP, General Assistance, Food Stamps), MEDS and IEVS.

2. G Procedures

Include specific Administration Division procedures, such as forms, mail, microfilm and receptionist duties.

Sonoma County Human Services Department Administrative Manual

Section 1-1

3. **Systems Manuals**

Include specific instructions on the use of the automated programs of the Case Data Systems (CDS), BDLM, On-line Handbook, Code Book, and CDS/Meds Error Messages.

4. **Adult and Aging Operational Procedures**

Include policies and procedures for In-Home Support Services (IHSS), Multipurpose Senior Services Program (MSSP), Area Agency on Aging (AAA), Information and Referral (I&R) and Veterans Services procedures.

5. **Employment and Training Policies and Procedures**

Include policies and procedures for the Private Industry Council (PIC) and Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) programs, such as Service Delivery Area (SDA) Staff Directives, SDA Policies and Procedures and GAIN Policies and Procedures.

6. **Family, Youth and Children's Policies and Procedures**

Include policies and procedures for Child Welfare Services programs.

7. **Valley of the Moon Children's Home Policies and Procedures**

Include policies and procedures for the Valley of the Moon Children's Home.

8. **Fiscal Policies and Procedures**

Include information on departmental accounting processes.

C. Department Bulletins

Bulletins are issued by the Director or other administrative staff. They expire one year from the date issued or not until rescinded, whichever is stated.

1. **Human Services Department Bulletins issue general information, announcements, and interim instructions pending issuance or revision of manuals or procedures.**

2. **Staff Development, Case Data System and MEDS bulletins issue specific information separately:**

a. **Staff Development Bulletins issue information on training, Civil Rights, distinguished employee program, or other topics of the Human Resource Section.**

b. **CDS/MEDS/IEVS Bulletins issue information, announcements and instructions**

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for systems; Transmittals accompany codebook and manual changes; and Memos issue information and announcements.

III. Procedure for Development of Department Administrative Manual Sections (listed in sequential steps)

A. Lead Author of Section to be Written or Revised

1. Determines the need to create or revise a written policy or procedure.
2. Prepares a draft of the new or revised section (see Attachment I for format).
3. Notifies Administration Planner/Analyst of the procedure's creation or revision.
4. Forwards draft to appropriate manager for review and approval.

B. Manager

1. Receives and reviews draft for accuracy and completeness.
2. Forwards to Administration Planner/Analyst.

C. Administration Planner/Analyst

1. Logs section in tracking log.
2. Assigns a number to the section as necessary.
3. Routes draft to Administrative Support Clerk.

D. Administrative Support Clerk

1. Receives draft copy of approved section.
2. Revises section incorporating changes.
3. Produces and routes appropriate number of copies for staffing with cover memo which lists section name and number, lead author and due date for comments.
4. Places original draft and control copy of staffing memo in pending folder and notifies lead author and Administration Planner/Analyst of due date.
5. Checks off copies as they are returned. Destroys copies without comments and forwards copies with comments to lead author.

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- E. **Division Directors**
 - 1. Share draft of new or revised section with appropriate Division Managers for input on content of draft. Give Division Managers due date to return comments to Division Director.
 - 2. Return draft with comments for revision by due date.

- F. **Lead Author**
 - 1. Incorporates comments into procedure if appropriate and valid.
 - 2. Sends final copy of procedure to Administration Clerk.
 - 3. If many comments are received, revises as necessary and sends to Administration Clerk for re-staffing.

- G. **Administration Clerk**
 - 1. Revises manual section as well as Table of Contents as necessary.
 - 2. Sends to Department Director.

- H. **Department Director**
 - 1. Reviews/revises final draft for approval.
 - 2. Signs approval.
 - 3. Sends to Administrative Support Clerk

- I. **Administrative Support Clerk**
 - 1. Revises manual section as necessary.
 - 2. Sends to Administrative Planner/Analyst

- J. **Administration Planner/Analyst**
 - 1. Reviews final procedure and logs.
 - 2. Coordinates or compiles procedures ready for issuance.
 - 3. Batches procedures and sends to Administration Clerk.

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K. Administrative Support Clerk

1. Sends final copies of manual section(s) and Table of Contents to print.
2. Distributes copies of new or revised section(s) and Table of Contents to Supervisors and Managers (Distribution C).

IV. Attachments

Attachment I Format for Written Procedures

FORMAT FOR THE DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATIVE MANUAL

All sections in the Department Administrative Manual shall be consistent.

The major headings are:

I. Purpose (required)

Explains the reason for the procedure.

II. General (required)

Contains any applicable policy statements and other explanatory information required.

III. References (if necessary)

Identifies any reference material related to the policy or procedure.,

IV. Forms (if necessary)

Identifies any particular forms the procedure requires.

V. Procedure (required)

Identifies the specific procedures needed to effect the policy. Lists the staff responsibilities for each step. Lengthy, specific procedures should not be part of this Manual, but contained in handbooks or manuals for the specific division affected. For example, the various steps to issue a mileage reimbursement check would be found in the Fiscal Policies and Procedures Handbook. However, the policy for requesting reimbursement, the form needed to do so and the approval steps would be in the Department Administrative Manual.

VI. Attachments (if necessary)

If the procedure alone does not explain the total process, and examples of details are needed, add attachments. Refer to attachments in the body of the procedure instead of including detailed instructions. Attachments should be numbered and listed as follows:

VI. Attachments

Attachment I	"Title"
Attachment II	"Title"
Attachment III	"Title"

ATTACHMENT 4

- Other County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) regional meetings to share planning needs, program strategies and retraining approaches under Welfare Reform.
- Focus Groups, involving over 100 community stakeholders, were convened to discuss eight topics related to welfare reform: business linkages, child care, clients, safety net provisions, immigrant issues, training for clients, transportation, and service delivery.

2. SonomaWORKS

Client application services are provided in a "one-stop" concept to ensure a comprehensive and efficient handling of applications for and delivery of services.

Co-Locations

Co-located partners include:

- Employment Development Department (EDD)
- District Attorney Family Support Division (FSD)
- Local Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
- Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) staff members
- Department of Health Services

Additional Services

Additional services include:

- Lump sum diversion services for applicants to assist in obtaining or maintaining employment.
- On-site referral to JTPA services for ineligible applicants.
- Outstationed Drug & Alcohol Counselor & Mental Health Specialist to provide specialized and unduplicated services.
- Post-employment services to provide the assistance needed to lift families out of poverty and into self-sufficiency.
- Development of long-term goals so that families are provided opportunities to continue their move toward economic independence.

Other Activities

Other activities include:

- Ensuring that parental support obligations are met.
 - Reduce the need for public assistance by increasing the consistency of child support payments.
 - Reduce the need for public assistance by increasing the parents' involvement in their children's lives.
- Participating in a number of demonstration projects to meet the specific needs of SonomaWORKS recipients.
 - A three-year pilot project in conjunction with FSD to provide employment and training services to noncustodial parents (NCP) who are unable to pay child support due to their unemployment or underemployment.

The Department is committed to changing the "culture" of welfare from one that focuses on paying benefits to one that promotes employment and self-sufficiency.

JOINT LABOR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

DATE: May 6, 1997

TO: Human Services Department Staff

FROM: Human Services Department Joint Labor Management Committee (JLMC)

Nancy Giannini	527-2198	Mgmt (EA)	Charlotte Creaghan	527-2953	Econ Asst
Roy Freborg	527-3102	FY&C	Mai Ho	528-5949	A&A
Janet Schroeder	547-5515	Emp & Trng	Elaine Hamlin	528-5820	Mgmt (Admin)
Rich Garza	528-5965	Mgmt (A&A)	Al Redwine	547-5560	Mgmt (ET)
Carol Bauer	527-2800	Mgmt (FY&C)	Anna Paul	528-5920	Admin-Fiscal

RE: ***HOW TO USE THE JLMC TO RESOLVE ISSUES***

The reverse side of this memo serves as a form on which you can submit items, issues, or questions to be considered by the Joint Labor Management Committee (JLMC) of the Human Services Department.

The JLMC operates on two levels: (1) an individual department may have a JLMC, as ours does, to deal with departmental issues, and (2) there is a county-wide JLMC, mandated by the MOU, to deal with county-wide issues. *The goal of both types of JLMC is to develop a non-adversarial model to resolve issues of mutual interest.* A variety of departmental issues may be brought to the Human Services Department JLMC. However, some of these issues may be referred to the county-wide JLMC for consideration because they have county-wide impact. (Please see Article 17.11 of the MOU for more specific information.)

You are encouraged to continue to use your supervisors and the chain of command as a first means for resolving issues before submitting an issue to the JLMC. However, if that path is not appropriate, or if you'd like to continue to seek resolution on an issue, please complete this form and submit it to a member of the Human Services Department JLMC listed above.

Please fill out the form as completely as possible. Although submitting your name is optional, we would like to be able to contact you for clarification of the issue and/or for further information. We, the members of the JLMC, will return to you a copy of this form with our written notes on how your item/issue/question was resolved. Disposition of all items submitted to the committee will be reported in the JLMC minutes.

(Questions and Item Resolution are on the reverse side.)

JOINT LABOR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

DESCRIBE THE ISSUE, ITEM OR QUESTION TO BE ADDRESSED:

WHAT EFFORTS HAVE YOU OR OTHERS MADE TO RESOLVE THIS ISSUE?

YOUR NAME (optional): _____

DATE FORM SUBMITTED TO JLMC: _____

.....
**RESPONSE OR ACTION OF THE HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT JLMC TO
YOUR ISSUE:**

DATE RESPONSE RETURNED TO STAFF MEMBER: _____

*(Additional forms are located at JLMC minutes bulletin boards or can be obtained from any
committee member of the JLMC.)*