

# Data Dashboard and Data Integrity Steering Committee (DISC)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Background**

The Santa Clara County Department of Employment and Benefit Services (DEBS) set up a Data Integrity Workgroup in response to unreliable reports emerging out of the newly implemented CalWORKS Information Network (CalWIN) in 2005. DEBS seriously questioned the validity of the data reports that were coming from CalWIN and wanted to get a handle on what was happening to their programs. The DEBS and the Executive Team tasked the Data Integrity Task Force to look into the reasons for the data integrity issues that belied the validity of many existing reports and to come up with strategies to make these reports more reliable.

### **Findings**

The search for accurate data from CalWIN led Santa Clara County to create a new CalWIN Division. This division brought technology and program together as a single team. It consisted of Program Services, CalWIN Application Triage Support (CATS), and Decision Support and Research (DSR). DEBS and CalWIN division together developed the Data Dashboard

which has become “the Bible” for tracking the key performance areas in the DEBS. It is intended for use by first- and second-line managers to meet federal, state, and local mandates, and its measures for program performance. The detailed reports behind the measures are intended for use by line staff and the supervisors. The Data Integrity Steering Committee develops an operational strategic plan, adheres to scope, legislation, regulations, All County Letters (ACLs), etc., as well as reports progress and monitors, evaluates and sets policy directions.

### **Conclusion**

Contra Costa County could use Santa Clara County’s model of Data Dashboard and Data Integrity Steering Committee as a tool and guide to develop its own Data Dashboard. A CalWIN support division with the integration of information systems and program analysts can immensely help improve the performance measures, and provide better data to management and line staff to help monitor their program performance. This may have no or minimal cost implications.

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## Introduction

Santa Clara County Department of Employment and Benefit Services (DEBS)'s response to Data Integrity and Performance Monitoring issues after conversion to the new welfare data system provides an excellent opportunity for an informative case study. Santa Clara County implemented the new welfare data system, California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Information Network (CalWIN) in 2005. It is an integrated, online, real-time automated system that records eligibility and benefits determination, client correspondence, management reports, and interfaces and case management for public assistance programs. It requires users to input correct entries in specific sequences on different screens in order to determine eligibility and provide appropriate benefits to clients. Soon after the implementation of CalWIN, the agency realized that there was no current documentation in CalWIN regarding mandated fields and the "work-around" performed by the CalWIN users affected the accuracy of reports. Management reports coming out of CalWIN were questionable, and managers were not getting the information out of the CalWIN system that they needed to run their operations smoothly. With the implementation of CalWIN, the changes required per state All County Letters (ACLs) were programmed into the CalWIN application at the consortia level; therefore, the functions performed by the Program Analysts in the Department of Employment and Benefit Services (DEBS) had become largely obsolete. CalWIN also prevented the 18 individual counties of the consortia to implement any technical system changes in their own counties. Since the accuracy of reports generated by CalWIN was not reliable, DEBS decided to utilize its own resources to develop and maintain an ad hoc reporting system. To accomplish that, Infor-

mation Technology (IT) staff and program operations staff needed to work hand-in-hand rather than in individual 'silos' to make sense out of CalWIN reports. This quest of generating accurate reports led Santa Clara to the establishment of Data Dashboard.

## The Work Group

In an effort to pull together the information that was needed in the form of reliable management reports, DEBS organized a small work group, including Operations, Fiscal, and Information Systems, to identify certain key performance measures and to figure out how to pull needed information from CalWIN. This work group, now being called Data Integrity Task Force, started with a goal of tracking "the progress in the DIS Priority efforts and Performance mandates." Initially the measures included the number of applications pending for over thirty days, overdue RRR's, food stamp error rates, and some newly established state and federal reporting measures like MEDS alerts and Welfare to Work Work Participation Rates (WPR), and displaying it through a single portal called Data Dashboard. DEBS leadership wanted the reports to be organized by program and by office and to have data over a three months period to see if there were any apparent trends in the numbers.

The task force was successful in pulling accurate data from CalWIN system and tracking the data. Encouraged by the success of this team, DEBS expanded the group to encompass a broader team of senior operations directors, fiscal and data folks and established the **Project Charter for DEBS Data Integrity System (DIS)**. The DEBS DIS structure chart is attached (see Appendix). This DIS project had the goal to ensure the agency met federal, state and local mandates which required timely policy interpretations, along with program implementation, monitoring

and evaluation. The Project Timeline Implementation and Completion of Deliverables were also established giving the charter eight months to complete the project. It was envisaged that by initiating this DEBS DIS, the agency would be able to address the following issues:

- A standard process for reviewing federal, state and local policy issues to implement policy and practices to deliver required mandates and a method to evaluate these efforts.
- Identification, initiation and monitoring of data clean-up efforts, including developing an understanding of relationships between specifications, functionality and reporting while building subject matter experts.
- Development of research and solutions to implementation problems identified as well as solutions to maintaining the integrity of the data.
- Determination as to whether existing problems are system-generated, due to user error, and/or policy-related or client-generated.
- Increased competency of all staff, including workers and leadership, ensuring peak performance.
- Development of training modules for immediate use and for use in training new Eligibility Workers and Employment Technicians.
- Initiation and tracking of associated modifications of business models, program handbooks, CalWIN announcements and BENDS.
- Identification of CalWIN application defects and enhancements.
- Coordination with IT and fiscal to refine Help Desk and claiming process.

This DEBS DIS Project had the following deliverables/products and were tasked to:

- Track incoming policy documentation and manage implementation efforts.
- Create user-friendly material for staff.
- Create a priority report list of the stakeholders to verify and correct any discrepancies identified in each report.
- Establish a list of identified problems with solutions, timelines and implementation of staff training to maintain data integrity.

- Create an internet website for communication that supports the monitoring and tracking of the related data reports.
- Meet local, state and federal performance mandates.
- Provide progress reports to DEBS and agency director, the state, advocates, Board of Supervisors, etc.
- Reduce fraud.
- Simplify accurate benefit issuance and employment services.

DEBS DIS Project succeeded in achieving its goal of the DIS charter. This was viewed by all as a good team effort and not a “blame-game”. In order to sustain the efforts of the DEBS DIS project of getting reliable data, it was now necessary for program analysts, management reporting and IT staff to work as one team which would then lead to organizational restructuring.

### **Agency CalWIN Restructure**

Santa Clara Social Services Agency saw the advantages of Program Services, Decision Support and Research (DSR), and CalWIN Application Triage Support (CATS) working together as a group under the CalWIN division. Santa Clara SSA had recently hired its CalWIN manager who had previous experience as a manager with Deloitte, the company that designed CalWIN. The manager’s experience and detailed technical knowledge of CalWIN and the operational needs of the user counties were invaluable to his team.

In CalWIN division, the Program Services Unit develops business process for DEBS operations staff and conducts all program audits. The CalWIN Application Triage Support Unit (CATS) performs production support, CalWIN conference calls, User Acceptance Testing (UAT), release notes, CalWIN help desk support and tickets to the project. The Decision, Support and Research Unit (DSR) is responsible for generating reports from CIS, for management, and for special projects. The members of this unit have different areas of specialization. This unit is responsible for coordinating the information input and maintaining Data Dashboard.

## Data Dashboard

Under the guidance of DEBS and CalWIN leaderships, the Data Integrity Steering Committee is instrumental in developing the Data Dashboard in its current form. The Steering Committee meets monthly to review the DIS report on new emerging issues, pending solutions on current identified issues and clarifies federal, state, local policy issues that will have an impact on performance measures.

The Data Dashboard is produced by the DSR Unit, although some of the measures come from the staff outside of the CalWIN unit. The Data Dashboard templates are posted on a shared folder on the network, and the non-DSR staff responsible for inputting the data measures does so between the first and fifteenth of each month. Then the DSR staff inputs their numbers created from the Business Objects queries of CIS data tables. The detailed reports are distributed to supervisors based on various distribution lists via an application called Info View. Staff is set up with Info View mailboxes where they can “pick up” the reports after a predetermined date of the month.

The Data Dashboard reports are organized by programs. The measures show the baseline figures and figures for the most recent three months and previous rolling 12 months average. Each measure has a “Goal” or “Desired Result” and a designated “Data Contact” person. Santa Clara County can be credited with having successfully implemented Data Dashboard as a performance monitoring and Data reporting tool.

## Implications For EHSD, Contra Costa County

Contra Costa County, like other counties, has its unique process of performance monitoring and

data reporting. The process has been dictated by the available infrastructure, resources, leadership, the range of population served and economic health of the county. The key lessons learned by Santa Clara County in their success with Data Dashboard could be applied in enhancing the current performance monitoring by Contra Costa County. Notwithstanding the differences, the similarities could be leveraged in achieving the Agency’s goal.

## Recommendations

The recommendations for Contra Costa County are as follows:

- Conduct an executive level evaluation to establish a Data Integrity Steering Committee (DISC) to create and oversee Data Dashboard.
- Establish Project Charter with timelines for the DISC.
- Designate Project Manager with strong program and/or systems knowledge to oversee the development of Data Dashboard.
- Align the Dashboard measures with the department goals, objectives and business processes.
- Consider revisiting agency organizational structure and make changes as recommended by the Steering Committee to achieve seamless coordination between program planning and support, staff development and CalWIN technical staff.
- Leverage the programming logic already developed for reports in Santa Clara County.

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# APPENDIX

## Department of Employment and Benefit Services Data Integrity System

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