

CCWRO Welfare News

Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations, Inc.

1901 Alhambra Blvd. Sacramento, CA 95816

Telephone (916) 736-0616 • (916) 712-0071 (Cell) • (916) 736-2645 (Fax) • www.ccwro.org

March 5, 2010
Issue # 2010-06

California Public Benefits Application Saga - Inefficient Computer System Needs to be Fixed

APPLYING FOR WELFARE AND FOOD STAMPS IN CALIFORNIA-A WAITING GAME

Ms. Jones and her two young children need to apply for food stamps and cash aid in Los Angeles. They wait outside for several hours before they are called into the welfare office building. Once inside, they wait for several more hours before they see a screener. The county completes the SAWS 1 and instructs her to sign it, which she does. The screener give Ms. Jones a verification list and told her to return it at yet another appointment when she is to meet with an intake worker. Again, she returns to the DPSS office with her two children. Again, she waits for hours before being called to the window, then more waiting until she is called by her worker. This new worker may ask for more verification even if the county has that verification in their files. In many other counties when a person applies for CalWORKs, they are given an appointment to come back long after the statutory seven (7) day timeline.

STATE LEGISLATURE ENACTED AB 7 TO CENTRALIZE APPLICATION AND ELIGIBILITY PROCESS

Last year, the California Legislature passed AB 7, Chapter 7, statutes of 2009. AB 7 provides for a statewide centralized eligibility and enrollment process for welfare, using technology to save money and make the system more efficient.

Today, any person can go to <http://www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/> and complete the FNS/SNAP Eligibility Screening Tool to determine if one is eligible for food stamps instead of waiting 30 days for a Food Stamp Eligibility Determination.

In most states people can apply for food stamps, TANF or Medicaid on-line. In California, on-line applications are available for food stamps and Medi-Cal. For the rest of the State this is mostly a dream.

As enacted, AB 7 envisioned the privatization of the welfare system. The Administration had said that, through privatization, AB 7 would save California \$500 million. During the last two meetings it has been made clear that the Administration has abandoned their "privatization" goals. AB 7 requires that the Administration set up a stakeholders group to start the planning process for implementing AB 7. The Stakeholders group is co-chaired by Kim Belshe, Secretary of the Health and Human Services Agency and John Laird, Former Assembly member. There are representatives from State agencies, counties and advocates.

Counties, led by County Welfare Directors Association, insist that there be more than one welfare computer system in California. Many oppose more than one welfare computer system, as being inefficient and wasteful. There are currently four computer systems for eligibility; LEADER, CalWIN, C-IV, ISAWS, and several other related systems. ISAWS is migrating to C-IV. In 2010-2011, California proposed spending \$234 million on welfare computer systems which are controlled by the county computer consortias. Yet counties only contribute \$14 million, which is about 6%. See the Chart on page 2 for more details.

The Eligibility Worker representatives suggested that the welfare programs need eligibility workers and face-to-face interviews at each step of the intake and eligibility determination process. This position ignores the efficiency gained by the use of technology. The Food Stamp calculator is a great example of how eligibility work can be done through technology. An eligibility worker would only be needed to confirm the accuracy the requested verification.

The third meeting was held on March 2, 2010. The agenda was designed to have the group break into subcommittees to deal with such issues as program simplification, fiscal and data and governance/technology. County representatives tried to slow the process by objecting to the

subcommittees. At one point Phil Ansel of the Los Angeles County DPSS suggested that the group take a break and then come back. When they came back, counties said that before any subcommittees meet, the entire group should be a briefed on the current welfare technology. Former Assemblyman John Laird suggested that the Administration would do a web presentation of current welfare technology status.

After more comments, the group finally agreed to have subcommittees to start doing some work. The next meeting will be at the end of March. A final report is expected sometime in November of 2010.

On page 2 there is a chart that shows the projected 2010-2011 welfare computer costs and who controls the various computer systems in California.

LAWS AND REGULATIONS

MPP § 40-129.33 "The County shall not complete the Immediate Need section of the application or the CA-4, except at the applicant's request."

Welfare and Institutions Code Section §11052.5 "No applicant shall be granted public assistance under Chapters 2 (commencing with Section 11200) and 5 (commencing with Section 13000) of this part until the office of the county department or state staff first personally interviews him or her for patients in state hospitals. ... The interview conducted pursuant to this section shall occur within seven days after the time of application unless there are extenuating circumstances that justify further delay."

CCWRO is an IOLTA funded support center serving IOLTA legal services programs in California. Types of Services Offered: **Litigation, Co-Counseling, Fair Hearing, Representation, Consultation, Informational Services, Research Services, In-Depth Consultation and Welfare Training.** Programs Covered: CalWORKs, Welfare to Work (WtW), Food Stamps, Media Cal, General Assistance & Refugee/Immigrant Eligibility. Refugee/Immigrant Eligibility. All Rights Reserved. **Contributors: Kevin Aslanian, Grace Galligher, Steve Goldberg and Diane Aslanian**

CALIFORNIA WELFARE COMPUTER COSTS PROJECTED IN THE 2010-2011 GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED BUDGET

Program	County Control	State Control	County Cost	State Costs	Total Cost
EBT Maint. & Oper.	No	Yes	\$3,471,000	\$7,083,000	\$27,038,000
EBT Procurement	No	Yes	\$5,622,000	\$5,622,000	\$20,830,000
SFIS	No	Yes	\$371,000	\$6,973,000	\$17,647,000
C-IV	Yes	No	\$2,446,000	\$17,402,000	\$46,268,000
CalWIN	Yes	No	\$4,275,000	\$29,059,000	\$74,330,000
LEADER	Yes	No	\$2,899,000	\$2,899,000	\$12,256,000
LEADER Replac.	Yes	No	\$2,974,000	\$18,182,000	\$45,579,000
ISAWS	Yes	No	\$0	\$9,482,000	\$23,931,000
ISAWS Migration	Yes	No	\$979,000	\$12,800,000	\$30,549,000
WDTIP	No	Yes	\$0	\$0	\$3,863,000
SAWS Statewide Project Manag.	No	Yes	\$0	\$2,912,000	\$6,639,000
TOTAL			\$23,037,000	\$112,414,000	\$308,930,000
County Control of Total Dollars			\$232,913,000	100%	
County Share of Total County Control Dollars			\$13,573,000	6%	