

CCWRO New 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

May 14, 2010
Issue # 2010-12

In Brief

San Diego County ranks last with the lowest participation • Imperial County asked DSS whether the 24 months of child care starts from the date that aid is terminated or from the date that the 60-month clock expired. In one case, the case was terminated June 2009, while the 60-month clock expired March 2009. DSS responded that the 24-month clock starts from the month following the last month that the CalWORKs recipient was aided.

- San Diego County asked DSS whether or not the State has Child Care Overpayment Notices of Action (NOA). DSS responded that DSS has no overpayment NOAs. Counties can create their own NOAs.

- San Diego County wonders if counties must pay childcare to short term exempt recipients who work part-time. After several emails, DSS clarified that anyone working any number of hours exempt or nonexempt are entitled to childcare.

- Los Angeles County currently runs four (4) reports on IHSS and Child Care. IHSS client receiving Child Care Payments are referred to IHSS for fraud investigation. We are unaware of the findings from these reports and the possible false hits they may produce.

Welfare to Work Peer Review of Tehama County

DSS completed a peer review of Tehama County. A peer review occurs when DSS and other counties review another county's program, in this case, the Welfare-to-Work (WtW) program. Tehama County chose the areas of review. During the review, the county set up a focus group of clients. It is unclear how the clients were selected. The report does not mention that the clients were randomly selected; therefore it is assumed that the county selected the clients.

Some of the interesting comments made by clients were:

There are too many people at each orientation and the room is too crowded.

There is only a morning orientation. There needs to be an afternoon orientation to make it easier for clients to attend.

Provide more notice before scheduling an orientation to ensure clients can arrange their personal schedules.

Orientations are not held in the community of the participants, rather it is held at a centralized location in a rural county.

There is too much information provided at one once to try to remember all of it.

Several clients said that the county did not assign them to components that considered the interest of the client being assigned.

Clients said that lack of childcare and transportation was a barrier to participation.

Some clients said they did not know about availability of childcare until after they started participating.

The county should have more evaluation of workers who are rude and need sensitivity training.

Provide more education choices in community college. Don't place clients in educational program for jobs they really don't like.

CONCLUSION: Lessons learned from this review are that counties fail to provide childcare before forcing CalWORKs participants to participate in an activity. The county assigns participants to components that are conducive to the county and not to the participant.

Do Counties Need Incentives To Do Their Job?

On May 3, 2010, the Legislative Analyst office released a report entitled "Moving Forward With Eligibility and Enrollment Process Improvements". This report can be found at: http://www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2010/ssrv/eligibility/eligibility_050310.pdf

The report reveals that counties receive \$3.4 billion a

year to administer the CalWORKs, Food Stamp and Medi-Cal programs. The CalWORKs benefits that will be issued during the same period are about \$ 3.4 billion.

The report noted that California has four (4) computer systems operated by counties at the cost of \$82.7 million. Most of the ISAWS counties have or will migrate to the C-IV system. There are 18 counties in the CalWIN system whose contract expires the end of 2013. Los Angeles County wants to spend about \$530 million to replace the LEADER system with LEADER 2. At this time, LEADER 2 is planned only for Los Angeles County. The Analyst wisely suggests that maybe the Los Angeles system should be built to accommodate all counties of California.

The Analyst also raises the issue of who would be responsible for the operation of a single computer system. The analyst suggests a group of counties should be responsible for operating the statewide computer system. In our opinion, the State should operate the system since it is responsible for the administration of the public assistance program. DSS is the principal and the counties are simply agents of the state.

The Analyst also suggests that information about the finances of applicants could be obtained from credit reporting agencies. The credit report does not contain information relative to eligibility determination, such as bank accounts. The credit reports show the FICO scores, identify the charge cards, bankruptcy records, etc. This has nothing to do with eligibility determination and could be viewed as invasion of privacy.

One major change that would eliminate a lot of verification is the SSA Match program already being used by the Medi-Cal program. The Analyst fails to mention that using the SSA match for CalWORKs and Food Stamp would simplify the system and save money.

The Analyst states that the Health Care Bills embodied in HR's 3590 and 4782 require that States establish an enrollment website and use electronic interfaces and data matches with existing databases to verify eligibility at enrollment and renewal.

To rationalize simplification of the welfare programs on page 13 the Analyst states that counties have not received increases in their cost of doing business for CalWORKs and Food Stamps since 2001 and for Medi-Cal since 2008. This is one reason to make the system more efficient suggests the Analyst. Then on page 18, the Analyst suggest that the State needs to provide counties, the agents of the State Department of Social Services, with "incentives" to save money and streamline the eligibility process. The Analyst states that, "...Absent such incentives, counties may lack sufficient motivation to undertake the sometimes-difficult changes needed to achieve efficiencies in the system." The Analyst has never suggested any incentives for welfare recipients to date. We wonder why are incentives sensible for counties, but not for poor single moms trying to raise their children on a fixed income level from 1989?

The analyst also warns that simplifying the system and having electronic applications can increase the caseload. The caseloads are going up and electronic application are here to stay as most of the county consortia's are gearing up towards electronic application systems today.

In conclusion the California welfare computer system is a mess and it's crying out for a change.