



CCWRO Welfare News-2022-05

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Inequitable Reporting Requirements for Counties and Beneficiaries

It seems that county management staff can't understand the systemic and logistical issues that cause CalWORKs and CalFresh beneficiaries to struggle with submitting their completed SAR 7 forms. As a result, counties punish beneficiaries unfairly when they fail to submit SAR-7 forms properly. For example: Ms. Smith, who has two children, took a temporary job over the holidays and reported the income on her January annual redetermination. Her employment ended in February. When she received her June SAR-7, she completed and answered "no" for income in the report month. The county responded by saying her SAR-7 is incomplete in that she failed provide verification of discontinued income. Ms. Smith cannot provide this verification because the business permanently closed in February, but that made no difference to the county welfare department (CWD) – "verification must be provided."

Meanwhile, counties also have reporting responsibilities. They must submit various statistical reports by the 15th of the next month. However, they experience zero consequences for their failures. For example: the April 2022 CF-296 is due May 15, 2022. Table #1 shows reports that must be reported as of 6-25-22.

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CalSAWS Update

CalSAWS New Two-Way Messaging violates state and federal law- CalSAWS New Two-Way Messaging Violating the Mandatory State and Federal Requirements of State-Wide Usability (CA 239571) CalSAWS System Change Request was approved on May 26, 2022.

Currently, BenefitsCal allows the welfare worker to send a message to the beneficiary, but the beneficiary cannot send a message to the worker. The May 26, 2022 system change allows beneficiaries to communicate with their workers when they get a message, ONLY in those counties that opt to use this feature. Approximately 20 counties opted for this feature. This is inequitable and a violation of the state-wide administration requirements for CalFresh, CalWORKs and Medi-Cal.

DV Victims Blocked from Using BenefitsCal by CalSAWS - It has come to our attention that before the transition to BenefitsCal, DV victims in Los Angeles County were able to access YBN and its various features. After the transition to BenefitsCal, DV victims are being blocked from accessing its features. DV victims complained to legal services.

Jen Tracy, on behalf of advocates, asked "Ask CalSAWS" We have a client who would like to use BenefitsCal to access their case information. However, they were unable to link their case because of a "confidentiality opt out record" on their case.

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TABLE # 1				
Report Name	Report Topic	Date last report published	Missing Reports Due	Consequence
CA 812	CalWORKs Overpayment & Collection	1/22	2/22, 3/22, 4/22	Zero
DSS 466	Welfare Fraud Reports	1/22	2/22, 3/22, 4/22	Zero
DPA 482	IEVS reports	10/21	11/21, 12/21, 1/22, 2/22, 3/22, 4/22	Zero
CF 296	CalFresh Caseload and Emergency Assistance (CF-ES)	12/21	1/22, 2/22, 3/22, 4/22	Zero
CA237HA	Homeless Assistance	2/22	3/22, 4/22	Zero

TABLE #2 show a very partial list of counties who have not complied with their reporting requirements for the CF 296 and the WtW 25 Reports.

These counties just did not report - period. So what can CDSS do? Nothing. And then counties have the gall to complain about not getting complete SAR-7s.

TABLE # 2		
CF 296- CalFresh Reports		
Alpine	Nov 2021	No CF 296 Report
Kings	Nov 2021	No CF 296 Report
Lake	Nov 2021	No CF 296 Report
Sierra	Nov 2021	No CF 296 Report
Stanislaus	Nov 2021	No CF 296 Report
Kings	Dec 2021	No CF 296 Report
San Bernardino	Dec 2021	No CF 296 Report
Sierra	Dec 2021	No CF 296 Report
Stanislaus	Dec 2021	No CF 296 Report

WtW 25 Reports		
El Dorado	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Fresno	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Humboldt	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Imperial	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Kern	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Lake	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Los Angeles	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Madera	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Marin	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Nevada	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Orange	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Riverside	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Sacramento	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
San Benito	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
San Bernardino	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
San Diego	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
San Joaquin	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
San Mateo	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Santa Clara	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Santa Cruz	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Tehama	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Ventura	Jul 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Alameda	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Butte	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Contra Costa	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Del Norte	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
El Dorado	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Fresno	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Humboldt	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Imperial	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Kern	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Kings	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Lake	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Los Angeles	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Madera	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Mendocino	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Merced	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Nevada	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Orange	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Placer	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Riverside	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Sacramento	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
San Benito	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
San Bernardino	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed

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San Diego	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
San Francisco	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
San Joaquin	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Santa Barbara	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Santa Clara	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Shasta	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Solano	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Sonoma	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Tehama	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Tulare	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Ventura	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Yolo	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Yuba	Aug 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Orange	Oct 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
San Bernardino	Oct 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
San Diego	Oct 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
San Joaquin	Oct 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Merced	Dec 2021	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Amador	Jan 2022	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Butte	Jan 2022	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Los Angeles	Jan 2022	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Mendocino	Jan 2022	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Shasta	Jan 2022	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Amador	Feb 2022	No WtW 25 Report Filed
El Dorado	Feb 2022	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Fresno	Feb 2022	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Glenn	Feb 2022	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Kern	Feb 2022	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Mendocino	Feb 2022	No WtW 25 Report Filed
San Bernardino	Feb 2022	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Tehama	Feb 2022	No WtW 25 Report Filed
Ventura	Feb 2022	No WtW 25 Report Filed

Counties submit incomplete reports. Instead of returning the report to the county to complete, CDSS reviews the report and if it makes sense, will then post it. Counties should provide the same grace to individual beneficiaries who depend on their benefits to survive even more than the counties depend on federal funding.

CALSAWS UPDATE (continued from page 1)

What can the client do to opt in to BenefitsCal so they can access services? What does the county need to do to make BenefitsCal accessible for the client?

CalSAWS Response: "Thank you for your inquiry. We believe that what they are seeing is a result of a CalSAWS case privacy/confidential indicator which protects the case in some manner in both CalSAWS and BenefitsCal. The customer can contact their worker to update the privacy/confidential indicator if they wish."

It appears that CalSAWS believes that CalWORKs beneficiaries can easily contact their county worker and it's done. It also seems that BenefitsCal has not been designed to protect the information of DV victims.

The reality is that most counties have call centers and beneficiaries do not have assigned county worker in 2022. But it gets worse. A DV victim did indeed contact her county worker who had no idea that CalSAWS blocked DV victims. The county worker had no idea how to remedy the situation.

But wait. It gets worse. The DV victim did contact her worker who had no idea how to help her.

CalSAWS should have initially created an "opt-in" online feature rather than forcing CalWORKs beneficiaries to contact their worker and ask for access to BenefitsCal.

Given the fact that CalSAWS does not know or understand the system from the beneficiaries' perspective, these issues will likely continue to affect DV survivors throughout the state. Violations of CalWORKs beneficiaries' civil rights will continue as long as CalSAWS is operated by the counties and not the single state agency.

CalSAWS Dashboards for Counties Only

CalSAWS has built a Qlik (is this correct?) dashboard platform accessible only to counties. Although 91% of the funding for this Qlik dashboards are paid for with federal and State dollars, the state agencies supervising the counties (CDSS, and DHCS), as well as California's taxpayers, are prohibited from accessing this platform.

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Counties have identified the types of data they want have available in their respective dashboards. They can create ad hoc reports, state reports, etc. CalSAWS confirmed this is for internal county use only. However, the state agencies ultimately responsible for the programs cannot create ad hoc reports for it is for county internal use only. Counties have a sweet deal here in which they pay 9% of the cost for the system and get 100% exclusive access to this secret information.

CalWORKs WtW Child Care Utilization

With the passage of SB 80, more CalWORKs WtW participants should now receive access to childcare. SB 80 no longer requires a WtW contact for childcare anymore.

For years counties failed to spend childcare allocations and have returned millions of dollars to the general fund.

Although 70% of the WtW participants need childcare according to a CDSS needs assessment, counties have mastered a way of depriving CalWORKs beneficiaries of childcare to which they are entitled to receive. As evidenced by Table #3, less than 35% of WtW participants receive childcare. There are some bright spots – San Luis Obispo and Tulare County have more people getting childcare compared to the number of unduplicated WtW participants.

Month/Year	WtW 25 -Unduplicated participants	CA115 -Receiving WtW child care	Percentage of WtW participants getting childcare
7/21	33365	10679	32%
8/21	34502	11010	32%
9/21	35143	11303	32%
10/21	36488	11466	31%
11/21	37751	11797	31%
12/21	36228	11957	33%
1/22	37793	11989	32%
2/22	37088	12183	33%

TABLE #4 shows the county-by-county Stage 1 WtW child utilization rates based on the CDSS WtW 25 and CW 115 reports.

TABLE # 4- Feb-22
County-by-County WtW Child Care Utilization

Counties	WtW participants-	Receiving Stage 1 Child	Percentage
Statewide	37088	12183	33%
Alpine	0	0	0%
Trinity	22	0	0%
Yuba	199	0	0%
Merced	328	11	3%
Butte	249	11	4%
Yolo	196	11	6%
Shasta	163	11	7%
Orange	2182	164	8%
San Mateo	122	11	9%
Sutter	51	5	10%
Placer	99	11	11%
San Diego	4388	630	14%
Marin	66	11	17%
Sonoma	314	55	18%
Siskiyou	34	6	18%
Stanislaus	363	66	18%
Tuolumne	22	4	18%
Imperial	674	126	19%
Monterey	248	47	19%
Santa Clara	1095	208	19%
Humboldt	280	60	21%
San Benito	48	11	23%
Sacramento	2222	513	23%
Los Angeles	11006	2683	24%
Calaveras	52	13	25%
Contra Costa	846	221	26%
Lake	52	14	27%
Del Norte	35	11	31%
Riverside	1726	569	33%
Santa Barbara	191	65	34%
San Francisco	965	332	34%
Alameda	1038	360	35%
Madera	176	63	36%
Nevada	104	38	37%
San Joaquin	646	247	38%
Napa	34	15	44%
Santa Cruz	223	102	46%
Kings	275	129	47%
Solano	584	408	70%
San Luis Obispo	51	64	125%
Tulare	996	1655	166%

CalSAWS 2022 Teleconference: Waves of Change and A Certain Amount of Clarity

On Thursday, June 23, 2022, nearly 600 people throughout California participated in CalSAWS 2022 statewide on-line conference via Zoom link. Most participants were county welfare department and state welfare agency staff. The conference was clearly geared to meeting the needs of county staff, which is the group it views as its user base. CCWRO staff and a few other non-profit and CBO employees also attended. Participants were encouraged to participate in two of six break-out sessions held in the morning and afternoon following morning and afternoon plenary sessions.

The breakout sessions were:

- Enhancing Your Imaging Experience
- Reports and Dashboards
- System Process Data
- Riding the Wave of Change
- Post Implementation Support
- Benefits Cal Enhance Public Access to Benefits

These workshop and Q&A sessions with Power Point expositions were presented during morning and afternoon sessions. Each featured CalSAWS staff or partners facilitating meetings that focused on common problems and challenges that county staff and low-income community advocates had faced during the transition of counties from California's four county welfare computer systems into a single statewide program and platform.

CCWRO staff attended the sessions on "Reports and Dashboards," "Post Implementation Support," "Riding the Wave of Change," and "Enhancing Your Imaging Experience." The presentations were primarily focused on technical aspects of the system but did offer insights into how CalSAWS has faced the challenges, glitches, and mistakes of the initial transitions.

CCWRO Researcher, D. Macklin, found the post-implementation session and its discussion of California's more than 10-year history of welfare services automation to be informative and intriguing. The takeaway from this session was that some people have spent their entire careers designing, redesigning, configuring and reconfiguring welfare benefit programs that mainly serve the needs of county welfare bureaucracies but not necessarily program

applicants and beneficiaries. The "Reports and Dashboards" presentation only reinforced the sense that both the conference and the system were designed to center the needs of county staff, not the populations they serve.

CCWRO Senior Staff Attorney Erin Simonitch found a similar focus in the sessions she attended. There was very limited mention of the beneficiaries of the programs the system is designed to facilitate. The Riding the Wave of Change session did provide some insight on training strategies used at the county level for staff transitioning to using the new system. The Imaging Experience session briefly addressed, but downplayed, some of the challenges faced when the system was first implemented last year without a working imaging solution.

It does seem that many of the imaging issues that caused delayed rollout in Los Angeles County have been resolved. However, looking forward to the next implementation waves, CalSAWS continues to take an optimistic (some might say "pollyannaish") attitude toward future challenges rather than proactively creating backup plans for critical functionalities.

There was a theme of contrition on the part of CalSAWS and is patently more obvious than usual private sector partners. Explained in detail were the specific steps that CalSAWS, an independent joint powers authority agency, is taking to bring live, in-person advanced and real-time training to individual county staff well ahead of any scheduled conversions to the CalSAWS systems and platforms. While these conversations were helpful, the needs of actual welfare benefit program participants were barely discussed during the day-long conference.

As the CalSAWS county-by-county conversion moves into its last months, it is now all the more critical for transparency between all relevant stakeholders. It's especially crucial for program beneficiaries and their advocates to be heard, seen and have their concerns be fully considered and addressed. Without advocate feedback, CalSAWS misses the big picture of welfare recipients as a diverse and complex population of individuals whose cannot always be resolved by using the right app. Perhaps the JPA and its governmental constituencies should be forced to take a closer look, not just at automation, but at how their technology can make the lives of welfare agency clients truly different and better.