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CalSAWS-A Beneficial System Only for Counties

In 2024, CalSAWS has again proven that this system is designed for the benefit of the counties only. The system was not designed for the benefit of CDSS, the single state agency responsible for the operation of the public social services benefits. During the January 10, 2024 CalSAWS CalWORKs/CalFresh Committee meeting, the group discussed the CDSS CalFresh Division CalSAWS Enhancement Request (CER) CA-269077 initiated on October 9, 2023. This CER pertained to automating appointments for compliance with expedited service timeframes by automatically scheduling the intake interview appointment that also considers and meets Expedited Service timeframes upon application registration in CalSAWS. If the application is ES eligible then the interview is automated within 3 days of the app date. If not ES eligible, then the interview is scheduled within 10 days of the application date.”

This CER was put forth to satisfy 7 CFR 273.2(e) and MPP 63-300.4 and streamlines service experience across all counties by CDSS as the state single state agency administering the SNAP program in California. To automate this CDSS single state agency proposal was to get counties, who are the agents of the single state agency, to vote for the proposal. If the Committee would have approved this proposal, then it would have gone to the CalSAWS Control Board Committee, another committee operating in the dark for “county approval”. The counties voted “no” to have equitable appointments for households who are food insecure. Is this a surprise? No. There is no public record of this vote.

CER CA-269077 would have brought California into compliance with federal regulations would have benefitted both CDSS and CalFresh eligible Californians. Yet, the counties

(Con’t on page 2)

The 2024-2025 CalWORKs State Budget Cuts

The Governor’s 2024-2025 State Budget by the Governor did not cut any program except for CalWORKs and child welfare. Most of the “budget savings” were in the form of “delays” and a raiding the safety net fund. But CalWORKs got the axe – defunding (1) the CalWORKs Family Stabilization Program that is designed that only families who are stabilized are forced to participate in the CalWORKs employment program and (2) the only CalWORKs jobs program in the form of “subsidized employment”.

When a family not in the Family Stabilization Program is required to participate in the WtW program and fails to participate, they are sanctioned by having their benefits, which are already below 50% of the federal poverty level, to be reduced further by about \$100 a month – that is toxic poverty for California’s over 24,000 needy children being sanctioned for more than 1 year.

(Con’t on page 3)

In this issue

- CalSAWS - A Beneficial System Only for Counties
- 24-25 CalWORKs State Budget Cuts
- News from Butte County
- CAPI Applications Denials - 60%
- CalWORKs WtW Participants Fleeced Counties
- New Federal TANF Bill

CalSAWS (Cont'd from page 1)

rejected the Request. The counties' action reaffirms the June 28, 2019 statement wherein President Martinez publicly bragged "finally a welfare computer for the counties by the counties" that expressly excluded the Department of Social Services, the State Health and Human Services Agency, the Governor's Office, the legislature and of course the "public"- especially the people who the system was supposed to help, the beneficiaries of public social services.

In 2024 and ongoing there is no more "migration" yet this year the CalSAWS proposed budget is \$360 million compared to last year's \$370 million. Was the annual migration cost a meager \$10 million? Thus, what is the \$360 million being used for? Maybe bringing the flawed CalSAWS system up to date and more responsive to the public it is supposed to serve and not just designed to meet the various flawed county welfare department "business practices" that make the program inequitable.

The remedy for the out-of-control county operated CalSAWS system is to enact legislation to reign in the counties by reestablishing CDSS and DHCS as the single state agencies in statewide control of their programs.

Thus, what is the \$360 million being used for? Maybe bringing the flawed CalSAWS system up to date and more responsive to the public it is supposed to serve and not just designed to meet the various flawed county welfare department "business practices" that make the program inequitable.

The Legislature must pass a law that CalSAWS must automate automation requests from the State Department of Social Services and the Department of Health Care Services just like county welfare directors are required to comply with all lawful directives the State Department of Social Services and the Department of Health Care Services pursuant to W&IC § 10802 that states:

"The county director shall, for and on behalf of the board of supervisors, have full charge of the county department and the responsibility for administering and enforcing the provisions of this

code pertaining to public social services under the regulations of the department and the State Department of Health Services. He shall abide by all lawful directives of the department and the State Department of Health Services, transmitted through the board of supervisors."

A similar law must be added to Welfare and Institutions Code Division 9, Article 2. Chapter 4.1. The current law does not even require CalSAWS to obey the law. It just says that CalSAWS shall have the goal of:

"Section 10816 - Goals of system

The system shall have the following goals:

- (a) Prompt and accurate verification of eligibility.
- (b) Accurate computation and timely disbursement of benefits for such public assistance programs.
- (c) Equitable, timely, and consistent treatment of recipients within each program.
- (d) Reduction of administrative complexity.
- (e) Strict enforcement of management and fiscal controls.
- (f) Collection of management information."

Under current law there is zero accountability for CalSAWS.

Section 10816 should be amended to read:

The system ***must provide*** shall have the following goals:

- (a) Prompt and accurate verification of eligibility.
- (b) Accurate computation and timely disbursement of benefits for such public assistance programs.
- (c) Equitable, timely, and consistent treatment of recipients within each program.
- (d) Reduction of administrative complexity.
- (e) Strict enforcement of management and fiscal controls.
- (f) Collection of management information.
- (g) (1) Follow all provisions of this code pertaining to public social services under the regulations and all lawful directives of the department and the State Department of Health Services.

(2) "Lawful Directives" shall include any request for automation enhancements.

Calworks Budget Cuts (Cont'd)

How many children received Family Stabilization Services? In 2023-2024 the FS-14 reveal that more than 10,000 children will receive Family Stabilization Services. The Newsom budget proposes to stop the Family Stabilization Services for over 10,000 children in 2024-2025.

What types of services does the CalWORKs family stabilization program provide? Domestic Abuse Services, mental health services, substance abuse services, rental assistance for the unhoused families, security deposit for the unhoused families, utility assistance for the unhoused families, moving costs assistance for the unhoused families, hotel for the unhoused families. It should be noted that the CalWORKs homeless assistance program limits hotel assistance to 16 days once a year. After the 16 days the family in the streets of California.

Based on the first quarter of 2023 FS-14 report for CalWORKs family stabilization program utilization it is estimated that during 2024-2025 over 1000 families will not received domestic violence assistance, 13,000 families will not receive mental health services, a whopping 30,000 families will not be able to overcome the multitude of barriers that they need to overcome to have the family stabilized before being asked to engage in a WtW activity, and over 12,000 homeless families will be unhoused which is equal to "state child abuse" in our view.

This is an unconscionable cut and should be rejected by the Legislature. As shown on TABLE # 1, less

TABLE #1 – SFY 24-25 CalWORKs Budget	
SFY 24-25 Funds Available for CalWORKs	\$10.3 billion
SFY 24-25 CalWORKs Funds for Payments to Families and Children	\$4.3 billion
SFY 24-25 CalWORKs Funds for Non-CalWORKs Programs	\$3.2 billion

than 40% of the total CalWORKs available dollars get to the CalWORKs families living in deep poverty. An unconscionable \$3.2 billion of the CalWORKs available dollars are taken out of the mouths of CalWORKs children living in deep poverty and used to build the state budget on the backs of CalWORKs babies and families. It is shameless and inhumane.

NEWS FROM BUTTE COUNTY

A homeless CalWORKs couple, with an unborn child are homeless and applied for CalWORKs and Homeless Assistance. In California's "anti-family" CalWORKs program only the pregnant mom can be aided. The father is unaided until the child is born. If the child is born on March 3, the father will be aided beginning April 1. When the Butte County worker authorized the temporary homeless assistance, the worker instructed the mom that the father of the child cannot stay with her. He must stay in the streets. How cruel.

The Butte County Call Center staff told a CalWORKs/CalFresh beneficiary that they only have to report a change in income if it is above the Income Reporting Thresholds (IRT). When the beneficiary told the call center worker that her income has gone down, the call center worker said, "you don't have to tell us about that". This beneficiary is being underpaid, which means Butte County is cheating her family out of cash aid benefits that she is entitled to.

At an intake interview a worker asked a bunch of questions and accepted the "yes" and "no" answers. When the worker started to tell the applicant about fraud and perjury, the worker asked the applicant to tell her in their own words what is "fraud" and "perjury". The applicant was forced to explain to the worker what their understanding of "fraud" and "perjury" is, even though that is not a condition of eligibility – but it is a "Butte County Business Practice".

CAPI Applications Denial Rate - 60%

During July of 2023 there were 1,848 applications for the California Assistance Program for Immigrants who are aged, blind or disabled.

During July of 2023 counties only processed 635 cases, or 34% of the applications. CAPI applications must be acted upon within 30 days unless they are applications based on disability. Of the 635 applications 224 were approved and 379 cases were denied. That is a denial rate of 60% denial rate.

Most of these denials are for procedural reasons based on the history of how public social services applications are processed by counties based on their “county business practices”.

CalWorks WtW Participants Fleeced by Counties

One of the major talking points by counties in support of the WtW forced participation program is that participants can get child care and transportation. When the WtW program was first proposed by counties in concert with the Department of Social Services, a needs assessment for child care was done. The result was that 70% of the WtW participants needed child care. Since then, after WtW was enacted into law as GAIN and then rebranded to WtW, less than 30% of the participants have received child care.

Transportation has also been major issue. Over the years, about 50% of participants have not received transportation. We are often asked “why”. Well, it is rather simple. Over the years there has not been a way for the WtW participant to request transportation, like a form that is readily accessible to be completed and submitted for payment. There is no statewide transportation request form due to opposition from counties.

The county welfare worker can get a travel claim, complete it and give it to clerical staff to process it. That is nice. But there is no travel claim for a WtW participant to pick up. There is no clerical staff to submit the claim to.

These are barriers that WtW participants encounter trying to get their transportation payments. In the early 2000s advocates suggested that WtW participants be empowered to submit travel claims on line. That suggestion was rejected by counties.

Some WtW participants are able to overcome these complicated “county business practice” barriers to attain transportation payments that they are entitled to according to county propagandist of WtW and many are not.

TABLE #2 on page 5 shows the percentage of unduplicated participants who were able to navigate the county business practice-erected barriers to secure the transportation services. Statewide it is 51%, which means 49% were fleeced of their transportation money.

Madera County only gave transportation to less than 11 persons out of 277 participants.

Butte County business practices were successful in making sure that 87% of the WtW participants did not get transportation.

Stanislaus County, a large county, a mix of urban and rural, denied transportation to 723 of the total 842 participants in September of 2023.

San Joaquin County 343 participants did not receive transportation out of 424 unduplicated participants in September of 2023.

Kern County, another urban/rural county, had 2441 unduplicated participants in September 2023. Under the Kern County Business Practices, a whopping 1,619 families were fleeced in September of 2023.

TABLE # 2			
County	Unduplicated Participants	Getting Transportation	%
Statewide	64832	33331	51%
Madera	277	11	4%
San Luis Obispo	214	11	5%
Lake	170	11	6%
Mendocino	111	11	10%
Marin	104	11	11%
Butte	602	79	13%
San Francisco	1270	170	13%
Stanislaus	842	119	14%
Merced	810	115	14%
Trinity	72	11	15%
Napa	69	11	16%
San Benito	69	11	16%
Del Norte	64	11	17%
Tuolumne	63	11	17%
Shasta	172	31	18%
San Joaquin	424	81	19%
Tehama	161	40	25%
Orange	2158	541	25%
Santa Barbara	247	65	26%
Ventura	477	134	28%
Kern	2441	822	34%
Humboldt	374	136	36%
Tulare	1515	566	37%
Placer	447	178	40%
Kings	707	305	43%
Los Angeles	25259	12294	49%
<i>Source: September 2023 WtW 25 and 25A</i>			

Federal TANF Legislation

S. 3051 – Casey - Grandfamilies Act of 2023

This bill expands access to specified programs for children living with grandparents or other family members who are not their legal guardian. Specifically, the bill provides that a child of a relative eligible for Old-Age and Survivors Insurance benefits is eligible for such benefit payments if that child (1) began living with such relative before age 18, (2) receives at least 50% of their support from such relative, and (3) has lived with such relative pursuant to a court order for at least 12 months.

Additionally, the bill revises the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) eligibility requirements for children living with specified caregiver relatives. First, the bill lessens the requirement for TANF applicants to assign their rights to child support when such assignment may impact the likelihood of reunifying the child with their noncustodial parent, such as where the noncustodial parent is working to gain financial stability so they may reunify with their child. Further, when a child, but not the caregiver relative, receives TANF benefits (i.e., child-only cases), or if the caregiver relative is 55 or older, the bill (1) excludes such caregiver’s income from that child’s eligibility determination, (2) removes the 5-year cap on assistance, and (3) exempts such caregiver relatives from TANF work requirements.

The bill also (1) encourages states to enact temporary guardianship laws, (2) provides grants for state plans to support caregiver relatives, and (3) requires the Administration for Community Living to provide grants for establishing cross-sector partnerships that support families with caregiver relatives.