CHAPTER VI: FUNDING AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

This chapter covers two infrastructure components essential to an effective program of identifying and serving CalWORKs participants with AOD, MH, and DV barriers to employment: funding and MIS systems.

Funding of AOD, MH and DV Services

The table below indicates the AOD and MH allocations and the dollars claimed for Fiscal Year 1997-98 and Fiscal Year 1998-99. Claiming problems have resulted in very low reports of expenditures in all six counties. The claiming and reporting of expenditures lags behind the provision of services. Providers must bill the AOD and MH Departments, then those departments must bill the local DSS, and then the local DSS reports the expenditure to the State. The counties varied in the speed with which they developed their billing mechanisms, and the rigor with which they collected and passed on invoices in a timely manner. *Thus, this information is not a reliable indicator of the actual amounts or timing of expenditures.*

AOD and MH CalWORKs Allocations and Reported Claims ($000s)

| | Fiscal Year 1997-98 (Actual) | | | | Fiscal Year 1998-99 (Actual) | | | | Fiscal Year 1999-2000 (Anticipated) | | | |
| | AOD | | MH | | AOD | | MH | | AOD | | MH | |
	Alloc	Claim	Alloc	Claim	Alloc	Claim	Alloc	Claim	Alloc	Claim	Alloc	Claim
Alameda	$1,100	$57	$346	$351	$1,400	$363	$1,300	$1,196	$2,410	$1,910	$2,298	$2,298
Kern	$457	0	$593	$148	$2,031	$309	$119	$155	$2,200	$1,267	$1,000	$660
LA	$6,000	$296	$3,200	$125	$30,000	$5,611	$21,000	$1,561	$26,000	$26,000	$22,050	$9,341
Monterey	$106	0	$88	0	$486	$173	$401	$401	$592	$592	$498	$498
Shasta	$96	0	$80	0	$528	$171	$80	$88	$474	$463	452	290
Stanislaus	$311	$56	$183	$3	$1,314	$426	$1,008	$330	$1,018	$730	$1,068	$706

What is considered an "allowable" CalWORKs expenditure varied by county and over time. The two major variations were as follows:

➢ Billing on a fee-for-service basis vs. supporting line staff positions, or using funds for start-up of new programs or for outreach/marketing efforts, and

➢ Requiring services to be part of a WTW Plan vs. covering any service to a CalWORKs participant

Claiming arrangements became more liberal over time for a number of reasons:

➢ The number of clients was less than anticipated so that there were ample resources to cover a broad definition of who and what services would be covered

➢ Concerns about demonstrating a maintenance of effort of other spending on the CalWORKs population diminished as there was no apparent decline in total clients

➢ The State DSS issued clarifications that the funds could be used for a wide variety of activities including capacity building and outreach efforts

Funds for DV services were not set aside in state legislation, but four of our counties did provide funds through contracts with their local DV programs.

Funding for DV Services

County	Contracts with DV Agencies
Alameda	▪ $275,000 in contracts to 5 local programs ▪ Plans to hire 4 contract staff to work for DSS
Kern	Local DV center provides training but no official contract
Los Angeles	▪ 1st round of funding was $3 M for shelter-based programs ▪ 2nd round of funding was $12 M for 50 agencies for a full range of services
Monterey	Local DV programs used as referral sources without official contracts.[1] Two local DV programs received $10,000 each in FY 98-99 to provide peer DV assessment of participants one half-day per week in two district offices.
Shasta	Contract with local DV program (through AOD) for $10,000 for education and support groups and $51,000 for transitional living services
Stanislaus	DSS pays for 80% of salary of staff from local DV program to be part of BHS team

Information System Issues

Data accuracy, timeliness, and integration were major issues for all six counties. Implementing CalWORKs placed additional requirements on DSS systems that now had to track hours tied to

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[1] Two shelter-based programs received funding in Fiscal Year 1999-2000 for the provision of services for participants referred with DV issues.

WTW plans as well as time on aid. The AOD and MH systems had to determine how to identify CalWORKs clients who were referred from DSS as distinct from those who came from other referral sources. And ideally the systems need eventually to be able to talk to one another.

Tracking and Reporting Issues

CalWORKs is a far more challenging program to monitor than AFDC and GAIN. And, the rapid speed with which the program was implemented has left many counties with inadequate systems to do the job. DSS information systems have had difficulties meeting the new tracking and reporting requirements. RAND has noted the overall difficulty it has had in obtaining reliable information from counties about basic numbers of CalWORKs participants in different stages of the Welfare-to-Work process.[2]

Problems that Project staff noted in site visits include the following:

➢ Some systems are not able to track the amount of time left under the 18-24 month or the 5-year time clocks

➢ In most counties the eligibility MIS and the employment MIS do not link so that neither the eligibility worker nor the employment counselor can easily get a whole picture of the participant's situation

➢ In some instances, making changes to the systems is cumbersome and time consuming since they operate through user groups which require multiple counties to agree on any changes

➢ Some systems lack the capacity to have as many users online at one time as needed

The difficulty of obtaining consistent information across counties is magnified by the variety of systems used. For example, there are five different employment information systems used in the six case study counties.

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[2] Klerman, J.A. *The Pace of CalWORKs Implementation*. Testimony to the California State Senate Committee on Health and Human Services, December 8, 1999.

Type of Employment MIS Used, by County

County	Employment System
Alameda	GIS
Kern	GEMS
Los Angeles	GEARS
Monterey	GAIN Online System [3]
Shasta	GEMS
Stanislaus	GEMS

Each county DSS submits to the State, on a monthly basis, summary information about the numbers of CalWORKs participants engaged in various types of Welfare-to-Work activities (Welfare-to-Work Monthly Activity Report). The Report contains questions about the number of CalWORKs participants that month who were referred for AOD, for MH, and for DV services, and for the number of CalWORKs participants that month who received such services.

The Joint CalWORKs Committee[4] considered the possibility of using these reports to quantify referral and service information across the State. After further study, it became apparent that the disparity in definition of "referral" and "service," and the way in which the information is processed through each county's DSS MIS could lead to more confusion and faulty comparisons than to useful data. The decision was made early in the planning and implementation for CalWORKs that the State would not impose on the counties detailed uniform definitions on CalWORKs data collection. This decision was in line with the general philosophy to delegate the implementation of CalWORKs to the county level.

Mental Health System Information on CalWORKs Participants

Most of the county MH data systems are able to produce reports on the characteristics of the CalWORKs population and the services they use, but the information is not available in a timely fashion, or with full accuracy. Five of the six case study counties utilize the INSYST system for mental health data. Los Angeles has its own system. All six counties have the functionality to track client demographic and clinical information, and service usage for its MH clients. The issue that each county had to resolve was how it was going to designate a "direct" CalWORKs client as distinguished from those "indirect" CalWORKs clients who were in the system and

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[3] Will convert to ISAWS in 2000.

[4] This is the committee cited in the Introduction that includes representatives from CWDA, CMHDA, and CADPAAC. It has been the forum in which the three associations, in collaboration with the State agencies can explore issues of common interest about CalWORKs.

were being billed through Medi-Cal. The counties needed a way of distinguishing this set of clients from the "new" set of CalWORKs clients.

Some counties added new CalWORKs procedure codes that could be used by any provider. Others created separate provider codes for those designated CalWORKs service units. In the end, each of the six counties had a way of distinguishing the two sets of clients. But extracting data from the systems for these two sets of clients has not been easy, and there remains considerable uncertainty about the accuracy of the figures in some of the counties.[5]

AOD System Information on CalWORKs Participants

The AOD statewide CADDS system has the capacity to collect information on all CalWORKs clients, but there are questions about its accuracy and completeness. Each client who receives publicly funded AOD services within the State is entered into the statewide CADDS system. The system contains a field in which providers are to specify whether the client is CalWORKs, and if so, whether or not the services are part of the client's WTW Plan. Thus, the mechanism for collecting data on the number of users and the types of services being received exists. But there has been little motivation at the program level for accurate completion of these data fields for those clients who might be CalWORKs recipients, but who have not been referred from CalWORKs, and who choose not to be CalWORKs identified. Clients whose services are paid through CalWORKs funds are tracked reliably. MH providers had a reason in the past to check on a client's Medi-Cal eligibility status because they could bill Medi-Cal. This has not been the case with AOD services, since the AOD Medi-Cal benefit in California is extremely limited. Therefore the AOD providers and, consequently, the data systems have not routinely tracked things like AFDC/CalWORKs eligibility.

In the five INSYST counties, the county mental health department manages the data system for AOD. The Los Angeles AOD data system operates separately from that for MH. In general, they use the same approach to identifying CalWORKs clients as they do for MH, i.e. creating separate procedure codes or provider sites. But as noted above, the data are likely to be only as good as the motivation of the providers to collect it accurately and completely. Three of the six counties were basically unable to provide us with information on the numbers and service use of CalWORKs AOD clients who were not part of the official CalWORKs program because they had not been referred from CalWORKs.

DV System Information on CalWORKs Participants

There is no county or statewide information about the users of DV services who are CalWORKs participants. There have been two reporting systems within California for local DV programs – one to the Office of Criminal Justice Planning (OCJP) and the other to the Department of Health

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[5] The State DMH compiled data from State Medi-Cal claims data for those aid codes associated with CalWORKs for Fiscal Year 1997-98. The information provided to Project staff from the six case study counties for the comparable group, for the comparable time was generally underreported compared to this State data.

Services (DHS). Both of these systems collected only aggregate information, and neither included a data element for welfare receipt.

Those counties that have developed significant contracts with DV programs for individual services (Alameda, Los Angeles, and Stanislaus) have established data systems that allow them to verify that the clients for whom they are being billed were CalWORKs participants at the time of receipt of services.

Integrated Data Systems

While almost every county's MIS people initially talked about a future time when they could share information across data systems, they have had to acknowledge that the obstacles are huge. A few counties (Kern, Stanislaus) have established cross-department data committees tied to CalWORKs with the mission of developing ways of better linking their data systems. But the more immediate problems of upgrading the employment systems to be able to do what is required under welfare reform seem to be taking precedence.

Summary

This chapter discussed two important infrastructure topics – funding and information systems.

Funding

Problems with the claiming systems resulted in low reporting of expenditures for AOD and MH services in all six counties. The inherent time lags in the claiming system limit its usefulness in terms of tracking expenditures by when the services occurred as opposed to when the final reporting is made to the state.

All six counties report an expectation that they will expend a higher percentage of their allocated funds in Fiscal Year 1999-2000 than they did in Fiscal Year 1998-99.

Management Information Systems

The DSS information systems have had difficulty meeting the new tracking and reporting requirements of CalWORKs. Although each county's CalWORKs program reports monthly summary information to the State DSS on the numbers of participants referred for AOD, MH, or DV services, and the numbers receiving services, this information cannot be used on a State level because of the lack of standardized definitions. Counties were given wide discretion in how these items would be interpreted. The differences in each CalWORKs program and the variations in data systems makes cross-county comparisons with this data unwise.

Mental health information systems are able generally to produce reports on the characteristics of the CalWORKs population and the services they use, but the information is not available in a timely fashion or with full accuracy. The AOD statewide CADDS system has the capacity to

collect information on CalWORKs clients being served with CalWORKs funds. Information on CalWORKs clients being served with other revenue sources is not accurate or complete. There is no standard county or statewide information system about the users of DV services who are CalWORKs participants.

There are no realistic expectations that DSS, AOD, MH, and DV will be able in the near future to link information systems to share data about CalWORKs clients.