



EMPLOYMENT &
HUMAN SERVICES

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M E M O R A N D U M

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To: Family and Human Services Committee **Date:** November 14, 2017

From: Employment and Human Services Department

Subject: #114 Impact of Technology on Access to Public Benefits

The Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD) is pleased to provide this update to the Family and Human Services Committee (FHS) on the use of technology and our technology vision for the department. We continue to press forward with new applications of technology that support our customers and staff.

STATE AND DEPARTMENT-WIDE SYSTEMS

EHSD uses multiple state mandated and managed systems to carry out its core functions.

- Contra Costa County is one of 18 counties in the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Information Network (CalWIN) Consortium. CalWIN is an automated eligibility system that supports the administration of public assistance programs including CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal, General Assistance, Foster Care and case management for Employment Services.
- We also use the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) to support child welfare services.
- The Medi-Cal Eligibility Data System (MEDS) is a data system for maintaining eligibility information for public assistance programs including Medi-Cal.
- Our In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) is managed through the Case Management Information and Payrolling System II (CMIPS II), a statewide database which supports and centrally processes payroll as well as assisting with case management and reports.
- Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) is a state debit card similar to an ATM card that is used to issue CalFresh and cash aid benefits for CalWORKs and General Assistance. This system interfaces with CalWIN.
- The newest statewide system is the California Health Eligibility, Enrollment, and Retention System (CalHEERS), a business rules engine to determine eligibility for coverage under the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

While not a state mandated system, EHSD is “paperless” for its public assistance program case records through the use of a document imaging and management system called Compass Pilot. The use of this system allows desktop access to case information and customer data for any EHSD staff with a need to access the data. EHSD has also used its internal technology staff to develop a number of applications to assist staff and to carry out our work more efficiently.

TECHNOLOGY IS IN THE CULTURE OF EHSD

The EHSD has a long tradition of using technology to carry out its business, whether with state systems or in-house developed applications. A strong contributor to this culture has been the need for staff in the department to be able to access case information from any location. This led EHSD to reduce reliance on paper records and move to electronic case records over 11 years ago. To ensure that our use of technology keeps pace with the needs of our staff and customers, the department assembled a Program Technology Advisory Committee that includes the director, all members of the department's Executive Team and key technology staff. This committee meets monthly to assess the state of technology within the department and set technology priorities for the department.

The use of technology fully supports the EHSD Vision, Mission and Values. The department is currently developing its long range technology vision that states: "EHSD technology is the leader in agile technology capabilities, interoperability and information sharing for empowering customers, staff and partners to achieve a healthy, safe, secure and self-sufficient community." Our technology goals over the next 3-5 years will focus on strategies that include:

- Customer facing technology
- Customer support using technology
- Productivity enhancements
- Pursuing innovation and ideas for internal and external customer service including processes for bringing ideas forward

We have an initiative underway to include our customers in our deliberations about the use of technology that they believe will be beneficial. A number of our customers participate in our job search program and part of their experience is to work at a personal computer to prepare resumes and send them to prospective employers. We ask them to complete a survey on how they are currently using their personal technology, e.g., smart phones, and to tell us what additional items they believe would be beneficial uses of technology. As a result of this survey, we know that across the county, approximately three-fourths of our customers have smart phones and would like to be able to get updates on case status and text messages as reminders of appointments and items that are due. Our customers want additional ways to communicate with us electronically including the use of email. We also know that over half our customers have access to technology including personal computers and are very comfortable with using technology. We continue to gather input from this survey but we are using the information we have already gained to inform our thinking on future directions.

INITIATIVES UNDERWAY OR PLANNED

There was a recent management evaluation conducted by the California Department of Social Services focusing on our CalFresh program. The evaluators are experienced state staff that travel to counties throughout the state and visit many social services offices. The evaluation team visited three EHSD customer service offices to observe our processes in real-time and to see what our customers experience. At the conclusion of their evaluation, and based on their observations, they were extremely complimentary about the technology that is available to our customers. They stated that they sometimes see one or two pieces of technology in a typical customer reception area but not the extent of technology to directly serve customers that they saw in the EHSD reception areas.

As customers come into the reception area they are greeted, and if needed, directed to a check-in kiosk. If they have an appointment or need to see a worker the kiosk produces a ticket which allows the customer to be called for the appointment or obtain service in order of arrival. There are large screen monitors that are visible throughout the reception area that show the number of the customers being seen. These monitors also provide useful information to customers to inform them of services or upcoming events. If they need to speak to their worker by phone there is a bank of phones with privacy protection to facilitate the calls. If they are bringing in documents we provide a self-scanning kiosk so they can scan their documents and not wait to see someone to

drop them off. There is also a physical drop box for documents if the customer prefers that method. We provide personal computers that allow customers to apply for services on-line from our reception area and as part of this service we provide scanners, printers and a copy machine. Customers can sign documents electronically.

For more than a year we have been asking customers if they want to be notified of appointments and due dates by text messages. Currently customers receiving CalWORKs and CalFresh benefits can receive text messages. We have over 14,000 customers that have opted-in to receive text messages and we are adding over 800 a month. We are moving to an "opt-out" process that will allow us to reach many more customers and we are looking at other program areas such as MediCal, Children's Services and In-Home Supportive Services for expansion of text messaging. The effective use of text messaging is a great service and is effective in helping our customers with the continuity of their benefits.

The Board of Supervisors fully supported the state legislation that allows Social Services agencies to donate surplus personal computers to citizens in good standing in benefits programs. EHSD has an agreement with a nonprofit organization to refurbish surplus computers and make the computers, along with an Internet connection, training and support available to our customers. To date over 50 families have used this program and we have over 150 additional customers that will receive computers by the end of 2016. We are taking steps to do additional publicity for this program and expect to see increased activity. This program can be instrumental in helping low income residents of Contra Costa County bridge the digital divide, help children with school work, apply for jobs, and get medical information.

As part of the CalWIN Consortium, our customers have access to My Benefits CalWIN (MyBCW). Through the MyBCW website customers can get information on assistance programs, apply for benefits, complete periodic reporting, find a social services office in their area, and check on their current benefits from wherever they are at any time. Access to MyBCW is also available through the EHSD website and we continue to publicize its availability.

EHSD works closely with Health Services, the Food Bank and other community based organizations on their efforts to use MyBCW to assist citizens to apply for benefits. These organizations provide additional portals that allow for applications to be submitted from additional locations within the county.

We recently opened a centralized mail unit where documents are received in a central location and scanned into the electronic records system so they are immediately available to all workers needing access. This allows for faster case processing and for customers to track the progress of their cases.

We know from our data collection, that approximately one-third of the people coming into our reception areas are there only to drop off documents. EHSD recently added Self-Scanning Kiosks (SSK) to our reception areas. This allows a customer to scan their own documents and avoid having to wait if all they need to do is drop off documents. The SSK have greatly enhanced customer service and the acceptance of the scanners by customers continues to rise every month. We also provide a physical drop box for customers preferring that method. To ensure customers do not have to leave an original document we provide a copy machine in the reception area for customer use.

We are finishing the implementation of our Workload Distribution Tool (WDT). This software allows us to collect, distribute, and track workload in our major programs. This software allows workers and managers to see and manage work more efficiently and effectively to meet processing timelines and provide data in near real time.

We are completing the first phase of an initiative to allow our customers to complete their periodic recertification interviews using video conferencing from an EHSD office. We offer this in English and Spanish and provide a touch screen monitor for ease of use. Customers can easily sign documents right on the computer screen. We are now moving this service out to all our offices and will soon provide for customers to video

conference from anywhere including their homes. We are also working with the contractor that provides translation services to offer translation via video conferencing, including American Sign Language for non-English speakers.

Our In-Home Supportive Services care providers can use an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system to check on the status of their pay. While the state processes payments for the care providers, the county works directly with the care providers on any questions. The IVR allows care providers to obtain information from any phone at any time.

EHSD has a goal of being a data driven organization and having immediate access to data from the programs we administer is critical. Our managers and supervisors need program performance information to facilitate decision making and enhance our ability to provide superior customer service. We are currently working on two tracks to provide quick access to information described collectively as Business Intelligence (BI). The two tracks include: i) EHSD has partnered with Santa Clara County Social Services to piggyback on their in-house custom solution. This gives us access to the information in EHSD's systems of record (CalWIN, CMIPS II, CWS/CMS) quickly and easily without the need to develop our own in-house BI or engage our Technology staff in designing custom reports; ii) EHSD, through our participation in the CalWIN consortium, has partnered with other CalWIN counties to support the CalWIN BI initiative. The migration of data into Santa Clara BI process is nearing completion and the CalWIN BI process is in testing. When these systems are fully on line, our directors, managers and supervisors can quickly answer questions about who our clients are, e.g., where they live, demographics, case status, and trending and forecasting, and overall program compliance. The programs supported include, IHSS, Medi-Cal, CalFresh, General Assistance, CalWORKs and Child Welfare.

EHSD is updating and replacing a number of internal programs to assist with timekeeping, position management and tracking, a personnel management data base, fiscal management and retrieval of policies, regulations and reference materials.

Our department is committed to making effective use of technology to provide our customers with a good experience and to assist our staff in carrying out their important work. We actively pursue new or better uses of technology that have been proven to work. Based on feedback from them, we continue to work toward providing multiple portals for our customers to apply for and receive benefits under the programs we administer to substantially reduce the need to come into one of our offices.