



EMPLOYMENT & HUMAN SERVICES

MEMORANDUM

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To: Family and Human Services Committee

Date: November 13, 2017

From: Employment and Human Services Department

Subject: #114 Serving the Public Through Technology

The Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD) is pleased to again provide an update to the Family and Human Services Committee (FHS) on the use of technology and our technology vision for the department. We continue to offer an array of services and 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 and mobile access to case information and customer data for any EHSD staff with a need to access the data.

EHSD recently went “paperless” in our In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Program. All records of current providers and those receiving IHSS services have been scanned into the Compass Pilot system and are now maintained electronically. New documents and cases are immediately scanned and indexed into the system so that they are available to all IHSS staff that needs them. This has also enhanced our ability to provide mobile access for our Social Workers as they make mandated home visits. Our staff has on line access to case records and is able to complete fillable forms on their mobile devices while they are in the home.

In addition to the state systems and systems for which EHSD has contracted, we also use our internal technology staff to develop applications to assist staff to carry out our work more efficiently. As we will discuss in this report, some of these in-house developed programs also greatly benefit our customers.

USING TECHNOLOGY IS SECOND NATURE IN EHSD

The EHSD has a long tradition of using technology to carry out its business. In 2005 the State rolled out CalWIN as the electronic system to replace paper processes for our benefits programs. In that same year, EHSD opened its first Call Center in Antioch and went paperless by contracting for an electronic records management system and scanning our paper records into the system.

EHSD has major buildings throughout the County and our customers come from all areas of the County. The ability for our workers to access customer records, quickly and accurately was a major factor in our drive to be paperless. Using electronic records allows EHSD staff to access case records at any and all locations where the customer is being served. We work to keep ahead of technology through the active participation of our senior managers that meet to discuss and approve technology projects. We also have a technology strategic plan that guides us in pursuing technology. Finally, we ask our customers what technology they would like to see that will allow them to interact with us on their schedule from a location of their choice.

The use of technology fully supports the EHSD Vision, Mission and Values. The department’s long range technology vision 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 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

INITIATIVES UNDERWAY OR PLANNED

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) just concluded a management evaluation of our CalFresh program. The experienced state evaluators conduct these evaluations 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. Our customers are greeted by a Greeter asking how we can help them. If appropriate, they are referred to a kiosk to get a ticket so they can gauge when they will be seen. We provide computer work stations that allow them to apply for benefits, check their case status, print documents or scan documents. There is a copier in the event the customer needs to make copies of documents. We have large monitors in the reception areas that provide information and let the customers know when they will be seen. We also provide a self-scanning kiosk that allows customers to scan their own documents, get a receipt and leave. There are also phones for the customers to use to directly contact their worker for any issues about their benefits. The CDSS evaluators stated that they

sometimes see one or two pieces of technology in a typical customer reception area but not the extent of technology we deploy to directly serve customers.

We recently added a dedicated monitor in our interview areas that allows our customers to see documents that apply to their case as they are filled out so they can verify the information as it is entered. The customers can sign the documents electronically so they are complete without printing them. After the documents are complete and signed, they are moved electronically into our document management system. This greatly speeds benefits processing, ensures the accuracy of information and gets benefits to the customers faster.

As stated earlier, our staff works with multiple systems with the potential to need information from three systems at the same time to fully assist our customers. Having the ability to display case information greatly assists our workers to assist our customers. We identified specific workers, based on a business need, and installed an additional monitor for their use. Having three monitors is a productivity enhancer and provides a higher level of customer service.

We know from our customer surveys that about 95% of our customers have smart phones. Our customers have told us that they want to be kept informed about appointments and other information about their cases. We have been using text messages for our CalWORKs and CalFresh customers and we are looking at expanding the use of text messages in other programs. We have nearly 26,000 customers that have opted-in to receive text messages. We have moved to an "opt-out" process that will allow us to reach many more customers. Using text messages greatly assists our customers with reminders and helps them continue to receive their benefits.

With our knowledge that our customers, along with most of the rest of us, rely heavily on smart devices for their daily lives, we are currently piloting phone a charging station at one of our large offices to ensure our customers have the capability to communicate with us. Reports are that the charging station is heavily used. If this pilot is successful, we plan to add charging stations at all our major offices.

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 209 families have used this program and we have an additional 65 families in the pipeline to receive a computer. 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, help our customers locate and apply for jobs, and get medical information. Our data collection shows that our customers in West County have the lowest number of personal computers in their homes. We are working on an initiative to reach out to our customers in West County about the availability of these personal computers and how to get one.

My Benefits CalWIN (MyBCW) is a website that provides information on assistance programs, allows people to apply for benefits, complete periodic reporting, find a social services office in their area, and for current customers to check on their benefits from wherever they are and at any time. Access to MyBCW is also available through the EHSD website. We are using text messages and other media to encourage customers not having a MyBCW account to get one. This portal is a great convenience and timesaver for our customers and allows them to avoid having to call or visit an office.

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 have fully implemented our Workload Distribution Tool (WDT). When our customers interact with us, this interaction frequently requires our workers to take actions or process documents. The WDT 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. The WDT is a major step forward in customer service ensuring transactions are processed quickly and efficiently and speeding up the granting or continuance of benefits.

We successfully completed the pilot of an initiative to allow our customers to complete their periodic recertification interviews using video conferencing from an EHSD office. The pilot included English and Spanish and a touch screen monitor for ease of use. Customers can easily sign documents right on the computer screen. We are expanding this service to all our offices to allow our 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 our deaf, mute, and non-English speaking customers.

We recently launched a pilot project of using our own bi-lingual Spanish speaking clerical staff to provide interpretation services to our Spanish speaking customers. We have about 35 such staff and before we contact an outside contractor, we locate one of our employees to interpret the interaction between the worker and customer. This speeds up the interaction and provides a higher level of customer service because our staff is familiar with the issues that are being discussed.

The State centralized the payroll process for our over 9,200 In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) care providers. However, we continue to field questions from our providers. We use an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system that provides virtual real time information on the status of their pay. The IVR allows care providers to obtain information from any phone at any time.

The Community Services Bureau deployed the CLOUDS Interactive Texting (SMS) service to contact clients, including automated SMS messages to families requesting absent child information, a Federal and State requirement for Child Care programs. This unique system guarantees our child care program complies with this mandate, whereas previously all parent contacts were manually done by staff.

The Community Services Bureau is currently testing/piloting the CLOUDS Mobile App for its Alternative Payments Program clients and providers. This app will address client concerns regarding Case and Provider Reimbursement Status, while also providing a direct, two way communication approaches between case managers, clients and providers.

Among the benefits of this technology is the ability of clients and providers to utilize electronic forms and attendance sheets as well as mobile scanning and drastically reducing the amount of time and labor, data entry and time required by staff to efficiently manage their caseloads. Another benefit of Electronic Attendance sheets is to allow the system to automate reimbursement calculations, according to child care contracts, and attendance inconsistency notifications.

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:

- EHSD and Santa Clara County Social Services collaborated on a CSAC Merit Award winning project to build on an in-house custom solution developed by Santa Clara. The collaboration gives EHSD 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. This is

a highly successful collaboration that continues on. It allowed EHSD to gain data much quicker and at less cost than would otherwise have been possible.

- EHSD, through our participation in the CalWIN consortium, has partnered with other CalWIN counties to support the CalWIN BI initiative. This system provides an additional opportunity to capture data on our major benefits programs.

The data available in the BI systems provide our directors, managers and supervisors access to timely and accurate information 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 our customers, we continue to work toward providing multiple portals for our customers to apply for and receive benefits under the programs we administer while substantially reducing the need to come into one of our offices.