

MEMORANDUM

Kathy Gallagher, Director

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To: Family and Human Services Committee Date: October 22, 2018

From: Kathy Gallagher, EHSD Director

Subject: #114 Maximizing Technology for Customer Service and Administrative Efficiency

The Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD) remains committed to using technology to support our customers and to allow our staff to deliver an exemplary customer experience. This goal is in our Values, our strategic plan and our culture. We continue to seek out best practices in using technology to enhance service delivery. At the same time, this year saw decrease in funding allocated by the State that previously allowed EHSD to be on the leading edge of technology. EHSD staff has also been active in working with the State on significant changes in the major technology programs we use to manage our social services programs. We have to deal with the impact of significant changes as the State upgrades and modernizes mature systems that impact our service delivery. Even in the face of declining revenue and competing priorities, we remain committed to implementing process and technology improvements for our customers.

We implemented a number of improvements and changes highlighted below:

- Workers that support our In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Program are mobile and work in remote locations to support our IHSS recipients. Having case records available on mobile devices greatly enhances their ability to serve our customers. At the same time, not carrying paper records greatly enhances the security of customer information. We have provided our workers with mobile technology and we put all our IHSS case records into electronic files that can be accessed from any location. This puts all the information the worker needs at their fingertips and when the customer interaction is completed, to obtain an electronic signature if needed.
- We know that over 95% of our customers receiving services in our District Offices have smart devices. As a customer service and to ensure we can connect with them, we have provided cell phone charging stations at all of our District Offices. These charging stations allow several phones to be charged at the same time.

- We recently completed implementation of a video conferencing solution to support customers that communicate via American Sign Language (ASL). In the past, we had to arrange for on-site ASL interpreters which had the potential to delay scheduling a customer visit. This video conferencing solution is fast and provides a “personal” touch by allowing the customer and the ASL interpreter to see each other. This process was recognized by the State and shared with other counties.
- We continue to work to bridge the digital divide for our social services customers. Our continuing efforts in working with a nonprofit organization, we provided over 100 personal computers (PC) to our customers via our PC Donation Project. This is a partnership between the nonprofit, Tech Exchange, and EHSD and has been in operation for several years.
- We opened four Navigation Centers and have Navigators in place to provide information and services to our customers. EHSD implemented a software tool to support worker interviews with customers, assess their needs, and provide a list of services that the customer may be eligible to receive.
- Designed and implemented an outbound call capability for CalWORKs to ensure a one-stop capability to interact with the customer by phone, obtain the information needed and obtain an audio recording of the customer’s signature, simplifying the process for our workers and the customer.
- While not directly supporting Contra Costa residents, EHSD staff deployed to support residents of Sonoma County during the recent fires. These deployments were in support of requests from the State as well as the American Red Cross. We have been able to use the information from these deployments to learn lessons that will greatly benefit staff and customers when an emergency calls for us to provide services to the residents of Contra Costa County.
- Redesigned www.ehsd.org to better promote the various programs, including home page promotion of EHSD services and county hotlines. The services include HICAP, Energy Assistance, VESTIA, Violence Prevention and the Workforce Development Board.
- Implemented an auto-callback feature for our Medi-Cal CalFresh Service Center. This permits customers to avoid waiting on hold for the next available agent if lengthy wait times are projected. Customers leave their callback number and are called back when their turn comes up.

- Publication 13 (Pub13), Your Rights Under California Welfare Programs, must be available in all customer waiting and reception areas and must be distributed and explained to all applicants and recipients at initial intake and reinvestigation of eligibility. Pub 13 must be available in a large number of languages. The requirement to provide this information to our customers is part of the State's Civil Rights Program and includes information on what customers can do if they have a complaint. EHSD implemented an on-line tool for effective and timely delivery of this information. This eliminated the search for recorders and equipment to play the audio recordings provided by the state. This process was in use during a recent Civil Rights evaluation of EHSD facilities and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is recommending other counties follow Contra Costa's lead.

EHSD is facing a number of challenges as it moves forward including:

- Declining revenue due to state cuts in program allocations.
- The need to reallocate technology staff to work on significant changes to state systems.
- The need to adjust business processes and models to changes in caseloads. With the decline in State revenue, EHSD will need to adjust how we deliver services. We must focus on the use of technology to better engage our customers.
- Many of our customers are "tech savvy" and we are pursuing opportunities to gather information on how we can enhance their ability to interact with us.

EHSD is planning or implementing technology initiatives that will continue to add value to our ongoing effort to provide exceptional customer service and maximize the use to technology. Some of these initiatives are:

- Enhancing two way communications between workers and customers using text and email messages.
- Expanding the use of video conferencing. As previously reported we are using video conferencing for CalWORKs customers but we are exploring the use of this tool for other programs and to allow customers to video conference from any location using smart devices.
- Expanding the use of telephonic signatures for easier recertification of benefits.
- Implement outbound calls for CalWORKs customers using auto-scheduling and auto-call back to more quickly process customer applications.
- Work with our translation service to offer video conferencing for non-English speaking customers. This will ensure that we have a resource available at all times during business hours in all the languages supported by the contractor.
- We will continue to work with new and existing customers to encourage the use of My Benefits CalWIN (MyBCW), an online portal that is available 24/7 and allows for the completion of new applications, recertification, and checking on case status.

