

DATA SYSTEMS AND CONFIDENTIALITY WORK GROUP

RECOMMENDATIONS ON DATA SYSTEMS DECEMBER 2001

INTRODUCTION

Identifying clients and families involved in *both* CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services (CWS) is a necessary first step to coordination of services. The Data Systems and Confidentiality Work Group of the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project was charged with identifying compatibility and coordination issues relating to data systems used in the two programs and determining actions that can be taken to achieve more coordination between the two programs' systems.

In order to understand the difficulty of pursuing a coordinated data system, the Work Group first reviewed the history of the development of the Statewide Automated Welfare System (SAWS) and the Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS). These histories are contained in Appendices A and B.

Based on this research and a series of county interviews and case studies, the Work Group then developed recommendations with the underlying objectives of honoring client confidentiality, preventing entry into a higher level of service, and restricting unauthorized access to information.

In this paper, the Work Group offers an overview of the challenges and benefits of sharing client data between CalWORKs and CWS and presents three county-level recommendations.

- Review case studies of automated and manual data-matching approaches in other counties.
- Provide data systems managers with adequate staff and time to conduct research and sample runs of the data-matching process.
- Carefully train staff about expectations for data use.

Data Systems and Confidentiality Work Group

Co-Chairs

Venus Garth
Regional Advisor
CDSS

Elizabeth Varney
Consultant
Northern California
Rural Consulting Services

Members

Mike Babcoke
SAWS Specialist
CDSS

Ursula Bischoff
Research and Planning Manager
Human Services Agency
San Mateo County

Judith Ann Boring
Program Manager
Social Services Agency
Santa Clara County

Tom Burke
Chief
CMS Support Bureau
CDSS

Ray Gallagher
Program Manager, Children & Family Services
Social Services Agency
Orange County

Glenn Jue
Program Policy Unit Manager
CMS Support Branch, CDSS

Roberta Mangini
Automation Manager
Social Services Department
San Luis Obispo County

Facilitator
Terry Luna
CWS/CMS Project Coordinator
Central California Training Academy

CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS OF SHARING DATA BETWEEN CALWORKS AND CWS

While the Work Group’s research indicates that identification of mutual clients¹ and data sharing can and do take place without automation, it is also clear that once county providers begin the information-sharing process, they prefer some degree of automation to ensure accuracy, increase efficiency, and improve client outcomes.

Unfortunately, the CalWORKs data systems (the four SAWS data systems – see Appendix A) and the CWS data system (CWS/CMS – see Appendix B) have not been designed for easy compatibility. Just as CalWORKs and CWS are traditionally two distinct divisions within county departments of social services, the two divisions’ data systems are also separate. Moreover, there has never been a legislative mandate, nor have any regulatory requirements been issued, that require the two divisions to have compatible data systems to support automated data sharing.

Only after a mutual client is identified can caseworkers and other providers work together to share information about that client’s needs.

There *is* a federal mandate in the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System regulations that requires a statewide Title IV-E Foster Care payment and accountability system. In California, this federal requirement has not currently been achieved statewide, but some capacity exists for coordination between the CWS data system (CWS/CMS) and the two welfare data systems – ISAWS (the state’s Interim Statewide Automated Welfare System) and LEADER (the Los Angeles County welfare data system).

Though complicated to initiate, there are many benefits to the automation of data sharing between CalWORKs and CWS, including the ability to:

- Identify clients that are mutual to both CWS and CalWORKs,
- Provide comprehensive services to the family with little or no duplication,
- Access appropriate funding streams based on accurate information, and
- Gain a more complete understanding of the family or client.

¹ In this document, the term “mutual clients” is used to describe those program participants who receive services from both CalWORKs and CWS.

HOW TO IDENTIFY CLIENTS COMMON TO BOTH CALWORKS AND CWS

The ability to identify families participating in both CalWORKs and CWS programs is an important first step towards coordination of service delivery. It has proven to be a difficult task, not only because of the cultural separation of the two programs within the county's social services agency and the lack of interface between the SAWS and CWS/CMS systems, but also due to clients' mistrust of the programs and fear of possibly losing custody of their children.

The Work Group recommends the following steps to counties intent on developing systems to identify mutual clients.

- **Review case studies of automated and manual data-matching approaches in other counties.**
Sharing information on available practices for client matching is important, as counties not yet matching clients can take advantage of the experience and knowledge of their colleagues and not expend resources to "reinvent the wheel."

Research conducted by the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project determined that some counties have already pioneered methods to accomplish a matching process for clients in CalWORKs and CWS, using both automated and manual processes. However, because there are four different CalWORKs' data systems, there is not one common automated methodology for producing a client match.

Consequently, the Work Group recommends that county administrators and human services managers review existing approaches used in counties. Table 1 presents case studies of three counties that identify mutual clients in CalWORKs and CWS. County size, number of clients, and availability of staff with technical expertise contribute to the degree of ease or difficulty in producing a mutual client match.

The Work Group also supports counties that are exploring how the Medi-Cal Eligibility Determination System (MEDS) system might be used to match clients. MEDS, operated by the Department of Health Services, is the only truly statewide system that tracks a limited amount of CalWORKs data. The Center for Social Services Research at U.C. Berkeley is using MEDS to match clients, and the Work Group believes that MEDS data is a possibility for use in identification of mutual clients.

- **Provide data systems managers with adequate staff, resources, and time to conduct research and sample runs of the data-matching process.**
Through interviews with county experts who have created data-matching systems, the Work Group determined that the process of developing the data-matching system is complicated and time-consuming. County leaders need to be aware that this will require trained staff, time, and pilot-testing to ensure accurate results.
- **Carefully train staff about expectations for data use.**
The Work Group recommends that county leaders carefully think through the process and protocols that will be used by clerical and caseworker staff to ensure that the mutual client information will be used in a respectful and productive manner.

Sharing information on available practices for client matching is important, as counties not yet matching clients can take advantage of the experience and knowledge of their colleagues and not expend resources to "reinvent the wheel."

Table 1

**Partnership Project Case Studies*
How Three Counties Identify Mutual Clients
in CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services**

Santa Clara County – Automated Match

Santa Clara is a CDS (Case Data System) county. The CDS index is updated daily from a batch file extraction from CWS/CMS. The state ID (county case number) is the common identifier to both the CalWORKs and CWS systems. Staff in both the eligibility and child welfare divisions have online access to CDS in order to determine whether or not a family is known to one or both systems. The index is searchable by individual name, social security number, address, and the county ID number assigned by the state. The index provides limited information, including identifying data elements, current status, program or aid type, and the assigned worker ID number.

Reports produced twice a month provide demographic data on clients, in addition to aid type, services program, and workers. The information is sorted in various reports for the different workers involved in the cases, so clients in common can be identified. The identified clients become the participants in coordinated service delivery.

Orange County – Automated Match

Orange is also a CDS county which combines data from CWS/CMS and CDS, using the state ID as the common identifier in each program. Each month, a download of CDS data is put in the datamart (an Oracle product), along with a weekly refresh of CWS/CMS data. A query has been set up using Oracle Discoverer to produce information on clients mutual to both systems.

San Joaquin County – Manual Match

The Eligibility Division produces a list of clients with names and identifying information. The list is sent to CWS and a similar report is produced from the CWS/CMS system. The two lists are compared manually and mutual clients are highlighted. Once comparison of the two lists is completed, workers involved with mutual clients are notified.

* Additional information on these case studies will be provided through trainings and technical assistance sponsored by the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project.

END NOTE

Coordination of services between CalWORKs and CWS depends on identification of mutual clients. While an informal, paper-matching process is possible in some small counties, an automated process affords many benefits and is the only feasible way to identify common clients in medium and large counties.

Counties wishing to identify mutual clients can learn from the methods developed and adopted in other counties, and thus avoid the waste of time and resources and likelihood of frustration involved in “reinventing the wheel.” At the same time, because the CalWORKs and CWS databases are not fully compatible at this point, counties will find that the matching process involves creative manipulation of data. In the long term, statewide leadership will be needed to improve compatibility of databases in CalWORKs and CWS. These recommendations are contained in a companion document, *Recommendations for State-Level Activities to Coordinate CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services*.

APPENDIX A

HISTORY OF THE STATEWIDE AUTOMATED WELFARE SYSTEM (SAWS)

In 1984, the legislature passed and the Governor signed Senate Bill 1379 (Welfare and Institutions Code Section 10816 - 10824) mandating the development of a statewide automated welfare system for California. As outlined in this bill, the primary functions of the system were to:

- Verify public assistance program eligibility;
- Compute benefits;
- Provide timely disbursement of benefits;
- Treat recipients in an equitable, timely, and consistent manner;
- Reduce administrative complexity;
- Enforce strict management and fiscal controls; and
- Collect data and management information.

Pilot projects were approved in the legislation and implemented in two counties:

- Merced Automated Global Information Control (MAGIC) in Merced County, and
- Napa Automated Public Assistance System (NAPAS) in Napa County.

Following an evaluation of both pilots, NAPAS was selected in 1992 as the one system that would be implemented statewide, and it was renamed ISAWS (Interim Statewide Automated Welfare System). Shortly after, however, it was determined that this one system would not meet the diverse needs of all California counties. At the time, technology had not developed the capability of handling a system as large as California's, while at the same time providing the flexibility and independence that California counties require to respond to the needs of their particular populations. Consequently, in 1995 the State Budget Act funded the creation of a Statewide Automated Welfare System (SAWS), consisting of four multiple-county consortia and a linking "middleware" system, known as CalSERV.

Given authorization to create separate databases, counties organized themselves into four consortia under the Statewide Automated Welfare System, known as SAWS (see Table A and Diagram A). The four consortia, currently in various stages of development and/or implementation, are listed below:

- **ISAWS**, formerly NAPAS, includes 35 counties and manages 13% of the state caseload.
- **CalWIN**, formerly the Welfare Case Data System (CDS), includes 18 counties and manages 40% of the state caseload.
- **C-IV** (Consortium IV) includes 4 counties and manages 13% of the state caseload.
- **LEADER**, in Los Angeles County only, manages 34% of the state welfare caseload.

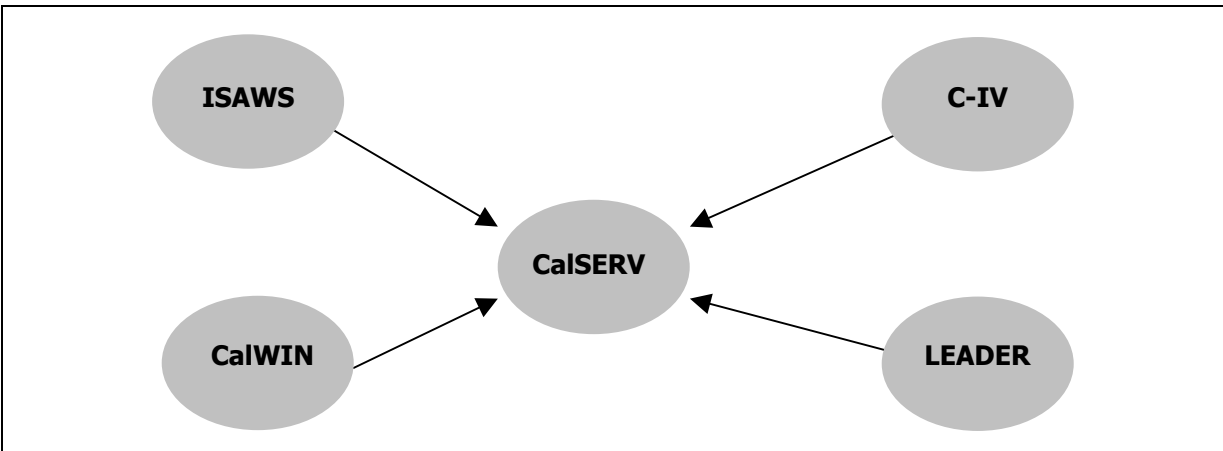
The four consortia make up the SAWS system. Each of the consortia comes under the SAWS umbrella, but they operate independently of one another.

The State, charged with the task of technically linking the four systems, developed the concept of the CalSERV Middleware Project. Unfortunately, this project has been postponed several times owing to budget constraints and the fact that the four consortia are not completely operational and ready to be linked. However, it is important to note that counties are able to operate their county-based systems without CalSERV being operational.

Because of the complexity of a system of this magnitude, the status of the four consortia under the SAWS umbrella is subject to change and is currently undergoing revision.

<i>Table A</i>	
Four Welfare Data System Consortia	
ISAWS – Interim Statewide Automated Welfare System	Alpine, Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, Del Norte, El Dorado, Glenn, Humboldt, Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Kings, Lake, Lassen, Madera, Marin, Mariposa, Mendocino, Modoc, Mono, Monterey, Napa, Nevada, Plumas, San Benito, San Joaquin, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Tuolumne, and Yuba
CalWIN – CalWORKs Information Network	Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno, Orange, Placer, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, Sonoma, Tulare, Ventura, and Yolo
C-IV – Consortium IV	Merced, Riverside, San Bernardino, Stanislaus
LEADER – Los Angeles Eligibility Automated Determination Evaluation and Reporting System	Los Angeles

Diagram A
Statewide Automated Welfare System (SAWS)



APPENDIX B

HISTORY OF THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (CWS/CMS)

In 1989, in response to federal requirements, Senate Bill 370 was enacted to mandate the development and implementation of a statewide computer system that has become known as SACWIS, the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System. The state legislation required the creation of a single statewide Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS) to automate the case management, services planning, and information-gathering functions of Child Welfare Services. To develop the system, which was to be implemented by an initial target date of July 1, 1993, the provisions of Senate Bill 370 set specific goals,² including the ability to provide information to:

- Allow Child Welfare Services (CWS) workers to make appropriate and expeditious case decisions.
- Allow CWS workers to manage their caseloads and take timely case management actions.
- Allow state and county administrators the ability to monitor and evaluate child welfare tasks and goals.
- Meet federal statistical reporting requirements.
- Create a common database and definition of information to evaluate child welfare services programs.

At the time SB 370 was enacted, there was no centralized statewide system that allowed state and county child welfare workers to share information. Many counties had their own local systems to manage caseloads. These systems varied from manual, paper-file systems to computer-based systems.

After a slow and rocky beginning, Glenn, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Clara Counties began piloting CWS/CMS in 1996. Statewide implementation was complete by December 1997.³

² As described on the California Department of Social Services website: <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov>.

³ With its database located in Boulder, Colorado, CWS/CMS is the largest Windows-based system outside of the United States military.