

Glenn County County Peer Review Visit Summary

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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Welfare to Work Division

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) recently developed a County Peer Review (CPR) program that was implemented on a pilot basis. Glenn County voluntarily participated in a pilot CPR as a site county. This pilot was performed in Glenn County on May 16, 19, 20, and June 4, 2008. The CPR team included a Welfare to Work (WTW) supervisor and caseworker from Tehama County, a supervisor from Yuba County and three staff from the California Department of Social Services CPR unit. Additional staff from CDSS attended to provide assistance and to observe the CPR process. The CPR activities consisted of kick-off and close-out meetings, interviews and case management observations with county staff, and a focus group with California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) clients.

A specific scope was identified in advance to provide more focused attention and assistance to areas that Glenn County Human Resource Agency (HRA) management felt would benefit their CalWORKs WTW program. The scope consisted of three areas: sanctions, exemptions, and the duties of the social worker, particularly in re-engaging sanctioned clients. This scope was based on information gathered from the county's self assessment. This visit summary describes trends and common observations relating to the three focus areas, as well as other general observations and unique county practices. In addition, it contains suggestions and recommendations from the peer review team based on observations gathered during the review activities.

Observations Summary

The Glenn County HRA is a strong county welfare department with high rates of clients being engaged and employed. The organizational structure consists of specialized workers and units who handle case files depending on the client's stage in the process. The structure of Glenn County HRA allows both the Social Services Division and the Community Action Division to work closely together to achieve related goals. This unique organization is supported by the effort of HRA management to develop tangible incentives for staff that are integrated within the areas of employment services and community services, and improves attitudes, communication, and success across the organization.

The two offices within the HRA both offer many services within their Social Services and Community Action Divisions, such as CalWORKs, Food Stamps, Medi-Cal, and community action programs, which are ideal for client access. The HRA also provides co-located behavioral health and alcohol and drug (AOD) counseling to help address client barriers and cure sanctions (see page 8 for more information). The strong on-site partnership with Workforce Investment Act (WIA) provides quick work experience (WEX) placement for clients, and also includes many on-site (WEX) positions at the HRA (see pages 7-8 for more information). The use of a "self-appraisal" tool has

proven to aid in the identification of client barriers earlier in the WTW flow (see page 8 for more information). The HRA has noted that having a social worker dedicated to WTW is one of the most successful strategies in helping to re-engage clients in either sanction or noncompliance status and when conducting home visits (see pages 9-10 for more information). The HRA has also benefitted from the implementation of timed-out meetings that are scheduled when clients reach their 54th and 59th months on aid to brainstorm about what can be done before their time on aid runs out (see page 10 for more information), and sanction action meetings, which are comprised of a team of various HRA staff, including the social worker, to brainstorm on specific cases that are in sanction and pre-sanction status (see pages 9-10 for more information).

The HRA assigns its clients to caseworkers depending on their current stage in the WTW program. This strategy allows caseworkers to develop their skills and expertise in a certain aspect of the WTW program, but may limit their understanding of a client's case due to frequent case transferring. Although there are many known benefits to providing WTW services with a structured approach using specialized workers, it can also potentially reduce rapport with clients, hamper communication among workers involved with the case, increase time gaps between activities, and create a slowdown for the clients' flow toward employment. A structure with fewer specialized workers, or possibly "holistic" workers to whom clients could be assigned as their main WTW caseworker, may help enhance the flow of client information. In addition, specialized staff may benefit by having full access to case details and history as opposed to limited access to their respective portion of the case (see page 12 for more information). The social worker may benefit from a computer work station with access to the automated case files, which, in return, would allow others access to his or her case notes.

The HRA may want to explore ways to get verification from clients experiencing a crisis or other difficult situation to ensure good cause status is given when appropriate, and to initiate the noncompliance process when warranted to avoid allowing too much flexibility. Giving clients multiple chances before initiating the noncompliance process to avoid sanction may ultimately result in clients' losing out on available resources and services that assist with becoming job ready and moving toward self-sufficiency (see page 13 for more information).

The HRA's job club/job search class demonstrates to clients how aid, participation in the WTW program, and employment can benefit them. The class has been successful at building rapport with clients and generating "buy-in" to participating in the WTW program (see page 11 for more information). Clients themselves reported that the class structure, training style, and content was extremely useful to them; and overall clients felt that the class helped them feel motivated and capable of finding employment (see pages 14-15 for more information). In addition, the HRA also maintains a Business Services Coordinator on site that informs clients regarding entrepreneurship opportunities and how to start up a small business (see page 12 for more information).

Conclusion

Many ideas and suggestions were shared through discussions between Glenn County HRA management and the peer county reviewers from Tehama and Yuba counties, including various ways to enhance county program performance. The CPR team recommends that Glenn County HRA share the promising practices relating to WEX, co-location of counseling services, up-front engagement, roles and responsibilities of the social worker, timed-out meetings, job club/job search, and the role of the business services coordinator as described on pages 7-12 of this visit summary with other county welfare departments, particularly through the state's WTW Best Practices website. The knowledge and experience gained from this pilot, as well as the constructive feedback received from Glenn County HRA managers and the county peer reviewers, was valuable to the refinement of the CPR process and tools.

Glenn County County Peer Review Visit Summary

Acknowledgements

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Welfare to Work (WTW) Division would like to thank Glenn County Human Resource Agency (HRA) Deputy Director Robyn Krause for volunteering Glenn County HRA to serve as a pilot county for a County Peer Review (CPR). CDSS would like to also acknowledge Glenn County HRA Employment and Training Program Manager David Allee for his assistance in arranging the logistics for the CPR site review. Additionally, CDSS would like to acknowledge Tehama County Casework Supervisor Lisa Matheson, Employment Training Worker (II) Nancy Overall, and Yuba County Social Worker Supervisor Tracy Bryan for serving on the CPR team as peer county reviewers. Their program knowledge and expertise were greatly appreciated throughout the CPR site review. CDSS particularly values the constructive comments and suggestions made by Glenn County HRA managers and the county peers about the CPR process and tools.

Background

With the passage of the federal Deficit Reduction Act in 2005 and reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program in 2006, the state and counties must increase their work participation rate (WPR). To assist counties in this effort, the Legislature passed Assembly Bill (AB) 1808 (Chapter 75, Statutes of 2006) which required CDSS to create a CPR program. The CPR is a collaborative partnership between CDSS and the 58 counties that encourages dialogue and the exchange of promising practices, best practices, and lessons learned among counties. The CPR presents an opportunity for counties to see, first hand, how other counties serve their CalWORKs WTW clients. The CPR process allows a site county to select a particular scope area for the review, enabling the county to become more informed about successful practices in the most needed areas. The goals of the CPR process include:

- obtaining an understanding of challenges that each county faces with respect to client participation,
- identifying and analyzing key patterns of program strengths and opportunities for improvement,
- presenting recommendations and sharing meaningful practices among comparable counties, and
- identifying the need for and providing ongoing technical assistance to the counties.

For the purpose of the CPR program, best practices refer to strategies that have been proven successful (based on data) in engaging participants or administering the CalWORKs program. Promising practices are viewed as strategies that have recently

been implemented or developed that appear to be successful, but do not yet have the supporting data to be considered a best practice. Lessons learned are practices that counties have tried but which did not add value to their county operations. Lessons learned can provide useful information to other counties about WTW program strategies that could be avoided or may be successful under different circumstances.

Scope

A specific scope was identified in advance to provide more focused attention and assistance to areas that Glenn County HRA management felt would benefit their CalWORKs program. The scope consisted of three areas: sanctions, exemptions, and the duties of the social worker in engaging clients, particularly regarding the re-engagement of clients in sanction status. The scope of the Glenn County CPR pilot was based on information gathered from the county self assessment. This visit summary describes trends and common observations relating to the three focus areas, as well as other general observations or unique county practices. In addition, it contains suggestions and recommendations from the peer review team based on observations gathered during the review activities.

Glenn County Human Resource Agency

The Glenn County HRA is composed of the Social Services Division, which includes CalWORKs eligibility and employment services, and the Community Action Division, which includes many additional supportive services to CalWORKs clients such as housing rehabilitation, job retention and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Employment Programs. The Glenn County HRA has two locations: 420 E. Laurel Street in Willows and 604 East Walker Street in Orland. These one-stop locations house intake, eligibility, employment training workers, behavioral health counseling, and alcohol and other drug (AOD) counseling. The HRA offers a job club/job search class known as Services Toward Empowering People (STEP). The HRA also provides a business services coordinator who works with clients interested in self-employment.

The first point of contact for potential clients begins with application screeners who assist with determining which programs are available to the potential client. The intake process is completed by Integrated Case Workers (ICWs) who review applications for CalWORKs, Food Stamps, and Medi-Cal eligibility. Once CalWORKs eligibility is determined, clients may be referred to either the STEP program or assessment. Clients who complete the STEP program without achieving full-time employment, as well as those for whom enrollment in STEP would not be appropriate, are referred for assessment, at which point the WTW plan is agreed upon and signed. Clients then progress through their WTW plan and, if completed but still finding themselves not in full-time employment, will move to a post-assessment worker. Employment and Training Workers (ETWs) have specialized caseloads within the WTW program and carry cases in a particular status, such as sanction, exemption, assessment, post-assessment, etc. When full-time employment is achieved by a client, he or she is returned to the ICW who monitors hours of client participation. When a client becomes

exempt or goes into sanction, his or her case moves to the appropriate ETW carrying that specific caseload.

Sanction cases receive extra attention from a social worker who works primarily with WTW cases and may make home visits on a case-by-case basis to assist with curing sanctions. Caseworkers may, on occasion, accompany the social worker on home visits, which is part of an effort to cross train and develop additional skills. The social worker is also involved with exempt cases, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) advocacy, and child welfare services.

The social worker, mental health counselor, and substance abuse counselor conduct work activities at both office locations.

Glenn County Site Visit General Summary

The CPR pilot was performed in Glenn County on May 16, 19, 20, and June 4, 2008. The CPR mainly took place at the Willows office location with one day spent at the Orland office location on May 19. The CPR team included a WTW supervisor and caseworker from Tehama County, a supervisor from Yuba County and three staff from the CDSS CPR unit. Additional staff from CDSS attended to provide assistance and observe the CPR process.

The CPR activities consisted of kick-off and close-out meetings, interviews and case management observations with county staff. A total of 15 interviews were completed: six caseworkers, four supervisors, three with upper management, one with the WTW social worker, and one with the business services coordinator. A total of 16 case management observations were completed with 11 caseworkers. The client focus group interview was comprised of 16 CalWORKs clients and took place during their second week of STEP class. The various CPR activities were held in staff offices, staff cubicles, conference rooms, the STEP classroom, and the business services office.

Summary of Observations

Promising Practices

Work Experience

Employment Services, composed of CalWORKs, WIA, and Business Services staff, is integrated under the management of both the Social Services Division and the Community Action Division. This relationship allows for a more flexible use of funds from both social services and grants, as well as more control and opportunities within the agency. It also allows employment staff to work directly with WIA staff to facilitate work experience (WEX) placements and for WIA staff to become more familiar with the WTW program. The benefits that clients can gain from WEX activities, including new job skills, work history, building future references, increasing clients' employability, and potential employment, are emphasized at the time of orientation and appraisal, STEP class, and at the time of WEX placement. Client referrals are made for WEX placement

if they can benefit from these activities and are based on their current job skills, goals, employment and education history, aptitude, and job interests. Opportunities for WEX placement come mainly from the public sector, such as public works, the fire department, and other public agencies. The Glenn County HRA provides opportunities for clients to gain clerical skills in on-site placements at its own offices located in Willows and Orland. The HRA recently negotiated with Butte College to offer a condensed office assistant program to CalWORKs clients to gain necessary skills to be placed in a related WEX assignment. This program is offered at the Butte College satellite campus located next to the Orland HRA office. During the time of the CPR, nine clients had completed the program. Opportunities to learn construction skills are available within the Housing Rehabilitation and Weatherization Unit in the Community Action Division of Glenn County's HRA. The overall goal of the Housing Rehabilitation and Weatherization Unit is to restore the homes of people with low income and to reduce their energy costs. The HRA also has built a strong relationship with sites that they use regularly, such as the county fairground for maintenance positions. When possible, the HRA offers clients with a choice of where they would like to be placed. Co-location and integration are part of the HRA's focus on providing one-stop services and has proven useful in facilitating WEX placements.

Co-location of Counseling Services

The HRA has AOD counseling available for clients with substance abuse barriers. Employment staff has also built a good working relationship with the on-site staff behavioral health specialist who works at both county office locations, as well as mental health physicians. Employment staff directs clients to referred services, which allow clients to receive immediate assistance. The HRA also provides domestic violence counseling services through a contract with Catalyst, a non-profit organization that offers domestic violence education and services to CalWORKs clients, and ensures that one Catalyst staff person is housed on site within the HRA. Client accessibility to services increases by having these services co-located and integrated. The HRA's STEP class also includes presentations about these services. These services may further benefit from a referral tracking system to learn more about why clients do not attend appointments when referred for services.

Up-Front Engagement

Client intake is handled by ICWs who take applications and determine eligibility for CalWORKs, Food Stamps, and Medi-Cal. Once aid is granted, clients are immediately enrolled in WTW and offered orientation and appraisal on the spot. After orientation and appraisal, clients may be scheduled for either STEP or assessment depending on their individual needs. This has minimized lapses between stages and keeps many clients engaged.

The HRA uses a "self-appraisal" tool to help identify barriers and address them without delay. This three-page document is filled out by the client with the caseworker present to provide assistance, if needed. The tool allows clients to self-declare issues which can be used as a basis to make referrals for appropriate services. The tool may also be used at orientation and appraisal, during the STEP class, and at assessment, giving

clients multiple opportunities to disclose information and helping to gather a more accurate picture of their situation and needs. The HRA has found that, over time, clients tend to become more open and communicative during the STEP class, and disclose more information, which helps to correctly identify and assist with current or new barriers. The social worker also has access to information on the completed tool.

Social Worker

The HRA has recently redirected resources to allow for one social worker who can assist other caseworkers that carry pre-sanction, sanction, and exemption status cases with the goal of preventing and curing sanctions as well as engaging exempt clients when appropriate. The social worker's primary function is to re-engage clients who are in sanction or in danger of going into sanction by giving focused attention to these cases and their needs. The social worker also looks for previously unidentified or new barriers, such as preventing and resolving transportation issues, and making referrals for mental health and AOD. This has proved useful in curing some client sanctions. Various HRA staff mentioned the ability of the social worker to make a connection and establish trust with clients, especially with those who are sometimes more difficult to assist. The social worker has been successful at developing rapport with clients very quickly and puts them at ease while working with them on their case.

The social worker often uses strategies involving home visits and intensive phone contact with clients. Making visits to clients' homes allows the social worker to see clients in their own environment and also changes the dynamic between the worker and the client, sometimes resulting in a more positive and comfortable experience. One strategy used when making home visits is to notify clients that the social worker would be stopping by between a range of hours or days within a given week, but not confirm a specific time or date. The strategy makes it more difficult for clients to avoid contact and increases the likelihood that the social worker will have an opportunity to meet directly with the client. If the client does not respond when the social worker visits the home, he may call the home of the client to see if contact can be made at that time. The HRA noted this as having been successful in some situations, such as when the client answers the phone and subsequently agrees to meet with the social worker. The social worker may make multiple home visits and may determine who is appropriate to accompany him in each situation (e.g., the carrying caseworker, a mental health worker, AOD counselor, or other appropriate HRA staff) to aid in resolving client cases. The home visit team is usually composed of two staff. In most cases where a home visit is determined as appropriate, the social worker makes the initial visit unaccompanied, and then determines who should accompany him on the next visit, if necessary.

Other duties of the social worker include some aspects of the application assistance process for Supplement Security Income (SSI). The social worker position also plays an important role by identifying families for linkage to Child Welfare Services and serving as a connection between these programs. The social worker currently works with clients at both the Willows and Orland locations. The social worker participates in regular monthly sanction meetings in which a team of various HRA staff meet to brainstorm on what can be done with specific cases in sanction and pre-sanction status.

The composition of this team is determined by the CalWORKs supervisors and may change based on the clients who are in pre-sanction or sanction status, and may include outside partner agencies or other parties that the clients have allowed to have access to their case information, such as the Glenn County Office of Education's Adult Literacy Program.

By focusing on the sanction caseload, the social worker utilizes his expertise and time more effectively. The social worker could better assist clients by having a more thorough understanding of the WTW program and processes used within the HRA. The HRA may also consider exploring a system or process for the social worker to track the county's efforts, including past attempts at engaging clients. The tracking efforts would also improve communication with the current carrying caseworker. Implementing a system to keep permanent records of the social worker's activities with clients will allow for sustained tracking of client information and better allow information collected by the social worker to be passed to the caseworker as the case is transferred. Access to case notes by other staff who need access allows for a more thorough and accurate understanding of the client's case and should be available to all case-carrying caseworkers. Providing the social worker with regular access to a computer work station, along with ensuring full access to client cases and the system to keep records and journal client case information would enhance the knowledge of HRA staff involved with client cases.

This social worker strategy, with its emphasis on sanctions, is still in its early stages but is already regarded among HRA staff as very helpful in preventing clients from going into sanction and to cure sanctions. The benefits of working with a social worker directly related to WTW are recognized by HRA staff and management across the board. Tracking the success of the social worker strategy would help show its progress and the positive outcomes associated with home visits conducted by the social worker. To continue success within this area and further enhance the social worker strategy, a second social worker could potentially be trained by the current social worker to help with pre-sanctions, sanctions, and expanding involvement with exemptions. A currently-employed staff member may have the skills and abilities and could be cross trained as an additional social worker.

Timed-Out Meetings

At the time of the site visit, the timed-out caseload was in the process of being shifted over to the Employment Services staff. The HRA schedules Timed-Out Meetings (TOM) when a client reaches his or her 54th and 59th months on aid. The purpose of a TOM is to brainstorm about what can be done for this group of clients before their time on aid runs out. TOMs include a round table-style meeting with the eligibility worker, the employment worker, and the social worker to generate ideas and come up with strategies that have not yet been tried with the client. These meetings provide an opportunity for additional efforts to be discussed among key staff and to make additional or extraordinary attempts at resolving the client's needs and barriers. Discussions cover the client's needs and priorities, planning for the family's future, and review of what else could have been done for the client to prevent him or her from moving to

timed-out status. The social worker may also conduct home visits, if needed, on a case-by-case basis.

Job Club/Job Search

The HRA's job club/job search STEP program is a two-week on-site class followed by a two-week job search activity. The class is located at the Willows office and provides transportation for clients who come from the Orland location. The class demonstrates how aid, participation in the WTW program, and employment can benefit clients. Clients hear multiple community and business speakers, and receive basic information about various support services available to them, ranging from Pacific Gas and Electricity (PG&E) weatherization services, domestic violence counseling services through Catalyst, adult education, and transportation services. Clients also obtain assistance with preparing applications, mock interviewing, and applying for CalJOBS (which is California's Internet system for linking employer job listings and job seeker resumes). In addition, clients receive funds for purchasing clothing for employment. The STEP class and training model builds good rapport with clients and generates "buy-in" to participating in the WTW program. Clients felt that the STEP class and trainers' teaching style allowed them to build rapport with other clients in the program and to assist one another with class activities. Participants in the client focus group felt that the STEP program structure, training style, and presentation were beneficial to them, and provided an enjoyable learning experience. In addition, the on-site Business Services Coordinator also presents information to clients regarding entrepreneurship and how to start up a business.

The HRA staff builds job search activities into WTW plans beyond six weeks, when needed, in order to increase the opportunities for clients to find employment while participating in other activities and supportive services. Job search currently requires clients to make at least ten employment contacts per week and to check in with the STEP instructor once a week. Requiring more employment contacts per week could increase clients' chances of becoming employed and meeting hours of participation. However, HRA staff noted that based on prior experience dealing with the limited number of local community businesses and the current economic climate, increasing the number of required employment contacts per week might inundate some local employers with job inquiries. The HRA may want to explore ways to supplement participation hours and get more accountability from clients in the following ways: defining what constitutes a job contact (e.g., calling, faxing resume, filling out and sending an application, internet contacts, etc.); emphasizing the availability of computer resources located in both HRA locations; encouraging clients to go to employers that are currently in the process of hiring; and considering the use of a job search form so clients can record their job search activities and hours.

The HRA is also exploring how timed out/safety net clients can benefit from attending the STEP class. The STEP class is also available to others who are not CalWORKs clients but are recipients of other programs within the HRA.

Business Services Coordinator

The Business Services Coordinator is located at the Willows office and is funded through WIA Rapid Response, other WIA funds, CalWORKs, and through a community development block grant. As a component of the larger Business Services offerings, a micro-enterprise assistance program works with individuals, employers, and the business community to provide technical assistance to those individuals interested in entrepreneurship, and starting or expanding their business. One of the facets of the micro-enterprise program is to give presentations as part of the regular STEP class cycle and give a feedback form to all attendees. Completed feedback forms indicated that 40 percent of STEP class attendees were interested in more information on self-employment. In addition to making presentations during the STEP class, the Business Services Coordinator also provides those clients interested in self-employment with business start-up kits containing information about business licenses, permits, marketing and financing. The coordinator can also match clients with business specialists in the field of their interest to serve as mentors and to share firsthand experiences from those already established in the business community.

The HRA may consider exploring the opportunity for STEP clients to do informational interviews with the business contacts to learn from the business community. In addition the Business Services Coordinator could also perform outreach to other nearby counties to seek potential client employment opportunities. Clients who participated in the focus group also expressed interest in job fair opportunities in the region as well as continuing the job fair that the HRA already organizes.

Challenges

Specialized Workers and Units

The HRA assigns its caseworkers to clients in specific stages of the WTW program. This strategy allows caseworkers to develop their skills and expertise in a certain aspect of the WTW program, but may limit their understanding of a client's whole case. Transferring cases as the client moves through the WTW program may hinder each specialized caseworker from having the opportunity to develop rapport and familiarity with clients and may also reduce the benefits of having one point of contact for clients. Continuous contact with clients was mentioned by some caseworkers as the most effective deterrent to clients' going into sanction status because it builds the relationship and allows issues to be recognized and resolved more quickly. Transitions from worker to worker may also result in losing contact or interest with the client, or cause confusion for the client. Establishing standard ways of becoming familiar with cases as they are referred or transferred could potentially improve communication between specialized workers, and prevent clients from "falling through the cracks" and entering noncompliance.

Some specialized workers are able to access only their respective portion (not the whole case); including both the hard file cases and screens, in the consortium system. This could prevent a specialized worker from being aware of critical information about the client's case located in other screens, notes and journals, and may limit workers'

ability to become familiar with the client's overall situation. Increasing opportunities for cross training of staff involved with the cases or reducing the number of specialized positions by making them less focused on specific areas of the case could also ease the transition of cases between various staff workers.

Noncompliance

Some HRA staff mentioned that they often give clients multiple chances before initiating a sanction depending on the situation of the individual. Being flexible with clients is oftentimes useful in times of crisis or difficult family situations, and may sometimes be supportive to build rapport. However, giving multiple chances to clients who go into noncompliance without initiating the sanction may also take away opportunities from clients to participate before their clock runs out, as well as causing confusion for the client about what will actually lead to noncompliance. Ultimately a client may lose out on available resources and services that assist with becoming job ready and moving toward self-sufficiency. Several cases observed during the CPR site visit showed multiple chances being given to clients, and most of these cases ultimately went into sanction. The HRA may want to explore ways to get verification from clients experiencing a crisis or other difficult situation and giving good cause status when appropriate. The noncompliance process provides clients with multiple opportunities and ways to prevent a sanction from going into effect, and receiving noncompliance notices and appointments are often enough to prompt some clients to participate rather than receive a sanction. Clients in noncompliance may be best served by their workers' initiating a sanction in order to get clients participating and perhaps subsequently revealing unknown barriers to participation.

Some HRA staff mentioned the positive impact on some cases when the workers mentioned the possibility of sanctions including the whole family. Some clients were interested to know about what could happen and what it would mean if full-family sanctions were to become a reality. HRA staff mentioned several times that the possibility of full-family sanctions was an effective motivator, and some cases demonstrated this success. For example, one client who read about proposed full-family sanctions in the newspaper came in to his caseworker office to clear his sanction as a precaution. Although some HRA staff cited the motivational effectiveness for getting some clients to perform their assigned activities, the HRA was careful not to threaten or mislead clients in any way since there are no full-family sanctions in the WTW program.

Hard Copy Case Organization and Documentation

Case management styles appeared to vary from caseworker to caseworker and sometimes resulted in miscommunication as cases are referred or transferred. The implementation of a standard procedure for hard copy case organization and documentation could help to locate documents more quickly, avoid unnecessary duplication of work between the hard copy file and the automation system, and allows for clear and thorough case notes to be maintained. The use of a standardized tab system for hard copy cases may be beneficial for this purpose, as well as saving time when locating information more efficiently. A filing guide with tabbed separated sections

to use as a standard template may be incorporated into case management. This practice will also serve to ease the transition of case files between specialized workers. Case management training covering how things should be organized and documented in the case may benefit individual workers.

Client Focus Group Feedback

The client focus group interview included 16 CalWORKs clients and took place during their second week of STEP class. Fourteen of these clients were in CalWORKs WTW for the first time, two clients were returning to WTW, and one other client had been in another county WTW program for one day. Client focus group participants were candid and spoke enthusiastically about things in the WTW program they liked and things they had felt could be addressed better or differently. A list of feedback shared by clients follows:

- All had very positive things to say about the STEP instructor. They described the instructor as “very personable”, “helpful”, “understanding”, “enthusiastic”, “really knows her stuff”, addresses “individual needs of each person”, “explains things well”, “learned more here than I ever did in high school” and “flexible”. Most clients said they truly enjoyed the STEP class, primarily due to the instructor.
- Overall, clients reported that applying for aid required a great deal of paperwork. It was redundant and a long process, but was relatively easy to complete. Some expressed difficulty finding their personal documents required for the aid application process.
- Some clients expressed that they received little or no notification when they were transferred to a different caseworker.
- Many clients thought that their caseworkers, while communicative, did not share all the available services with them. Some mentioned they often got information about WTW services from their peers, other CalWORKs clients they know personally or from classes attended at the One-Stop.
- Some clients also expressed concerns that the CalWORKs rights and responsibilities video shown during orientation and appraisal included difficult terminology and language. Some said the amount of information could be overwhelming but added that caseworkers were available to answer questions and assist with WTW paperwork.
- Most said they had routine contact and good rapport and communication with their caseworker. Several mentioned that they liked being able to “drop in” to talk to their caseworker. Most felt that they could get their questions answered when needed.
- Flexibility was identified as being one of the most helpful things to allow for continued participation. For example, clients are allowed to miss up to two days of STEP. Days can also be made up in the next STEP cycle.
- Child care was also identified as crucial to being able to participate in STEP. In some instances, some clients expressed difficulty in obtaining or arranging child care.

- Some clients felt that they were passed from caseworker to caseworker and were starting the process over each time their worker changed.
- Most clients described STEP as being more personal and individualized, and they didn't feel like just a case with paperwork. Many said their personal needs were addressed and they better understood what they personally needed to do.
- Most clients felt that they had learned a lot and that STEP would definitely help them get a job. Many said that STEP has made them feel more motivated to make getting a job their priority.
- Over half of the class was from the Orland office, and many felt it would be helpful if STEP was offered in both locations. This would reduce problems with transportation and child care. Several said the public bus system was not convenient.
- Many clients said that the life skills information provided in the STEP program, such as managing bills and nutrition, is very helpful. They also appreciated getting information on available counseling services.
- Several clients said that the opportunity to share stories with other STEP classmates gave them a feeling of hope.
- Some clients said that mock interviewing was very helpful, and especially appreciated the feedback from the instructor and classmates.
- Many clients said they found the presentations by the diverse speakers informative and useful.

Conclusion

The Glenn County HRA is a strong county welfare department with high rates of clients being engaged and employed. The HRA has enthusiastic staff that cares about their clients and wants them to succeed. The organizational structure consists of specialized workers and units who handle case files depending on a client's stage in the process. The structure of Glenn County HRA allows both the Social Services Division and the Community Action Division to work closely together to achieve related goals. This unique organization is supported by the effort of HRA management to develop tangible incentives for staff integrated within the areas of employment services and community services, and to improve attitudes, communication, and success across the organization.

Both offices within the HRA offer many services within their Social Services and Community Action Divisions, such as CalWORKs, Food Stamps, Medi-Cal, and community action programs, which are ideal for client access. The HRA also provides co-located behavioral health and AOD counseling to help address client barriers and cure sanctions. The Glenn County HRA shows an attention to specific resources that clients need to succeed both as WTW clients and as they become self-sufficient. The strong on-site partnership with WIA provides quick WEX placement for clients, and also includes many on-site WEX positions at the HRA. The use of the "self-appraisal" tool by the HRA has proven to aid in the identification of client barriers earlier in the WTW flow. HRA staff noted that use of the social worker is one of the most successful strategies in

helping to re-engage clients in sanction and noncompliance statuses and in conducting home visits. The HRA has also benefitted from the implementation of regular timed-out meetings and sanction meetings.

Although there are benefits to providing WTW services with a structured approach using specialized workers, it can potentially reduce rapport with clients, communication among workers involved with the case, increase time gaps between activities, and create a slowdown for the clients' flow toward employment. A structure with fewer specialized workers, or possibly "holistic" workers to whom clients could be assigned as their main workers from up-front WTW activities (e.g., orientation, appraisal, job club, assessment) through creation of the WTW plan, may help enhance the flow of client information as it transitions among staff. Furthermore, specialized staff could benefit by having full access to case details and history. Cross training may also help ease the referral and transition process between caseworkers. The social worker and caseworkers may also benefit from cross training to learn more about the WTW process and techniques used by each other and the social worker. The social worker may benefit from a computer work station with access to the automated case files, which, in return, would allow others access to his case notes.

Caseworkers also work to develop and maintain rapport with clients, which is crucial to their participation and success. The information provided during the STEP class was felt to be extremely useful by clients in the focus group, and overall clients felt that the class helped them feel motivated and capable of finding employment. The motivating practice of posting each client's long-term goal onto a wall in the STEP classroom served as a visual reminder for each client of what they were striving for and what could be achieved from the WTW program. The STEP class also served as a link to other resources, such as counseling services and assistance with entrepreneurship through the business services coordinator.

Many ideas were shared between the Glenn County HRA and the peer county reviewers from Tehama and Yuba counties, as well as potential changes to enhance the program. The staff at Glenn County HRA was extremely supportive, patient, and enthusiastic during the pilot CPR process and the site visit. The knowledge and experience gained from the Glenn CPR pilot and future site reviews will help CDSS and participating counties in refining and improving the CPR process and sharing information that will assist all counties with their WTW program. The CPR team recommends that Glenn County HRA share the promising practices described on pages 7-12 of this visit summary with other county welfare departments, particularly through the state's WTW Best Practices website.