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Taking the Human Out of Human Services

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TAKING THE HUMAN OUT OF HUMAN SERVICES

By

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Abstract

The State of California required all 58 counties social services departments to convert their case management processes for eligibility determinations on public assistance programs to one of four State Automated Welfare Systems (SAWS). There are thirty-five Interim State Automated Welfare System, (ISAWS) counties, Los Angeles Eligibility Automated Determination Evaluation and Reporting system, (LEADER) in Los Angeles county, four Consortium IV, (C-IV) counties, and eighteen California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Information Network, (CalWIN) counties. All four SAWS were intended to make eligibility determinations more cost efficient in addition to lessening the amount of time it takes to process an application for benefits. This paper will analyze the effects of the CalWIN system in Yolo County by comparing timely and accurate issuance of cash assistance in a prior Calwin year, 2003, and a post CalWIN year, 2008. Additionally, the paper will research the number of resources necessary to process cash benefit applications for each of these years.

Introduction:

The California Legislature began its journey into automating the issuance of welfare benefits in 1979. However, the development of a State Automated Welfare System (SAWS) did not begin until 1984. The original intent of the legislature was to develop one system that would meet the needs of all fifty-eight counties. In 1995, Chapter 303 of the California Budget Act allowed for the development of four separate systems to be set up as consortiums. "The purpose of the consortium concept is to facilitate the collaboration of Counties in meeting their business automation needs in the areas of system planning, development, implementation, and maintenance." (ISAWS History, n.d.). At the time this was passed there were two SAWS systems in use, Los Angeles Eligibility Automated Determination Evaluation and Reporting system (LEADER) in Los Angeles county and Interim State Automated Welfare System (ISAWS) in 15 various counties, the majority of which were located in Northern California. Eventually in 1997 and1998, 20 more counties were added to the ISAWS system. The Consortium -IV (C-IV) System was implemented by October 2004 in four counties, Riverside, San Bernardino, Stanislaus, and Merced. The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Information Network (CalWIN) system "has been used in 18 California counties since 2005. It replaced a legacy system, CDS, which lacked sufficient automation to support tracking of time-on-aid federal requirements." (CalWIN, n.d.) The CalWIN counties are located throughout the State of California. CalWIN serves the largest percentage of welfare cases in the state, 41 percent. Leader serves 34 percent, C-IV 12

percent, and ISAWS 13 percent. In fact, CalWIN is touted as being the largest human services system in the United States. (History of SAWS)

Prior to full automation of the fifty-eight counties, eligibility determinations were processed manually by eligibility workers, (EW). The client applying for benefits would complete a paper statement of facts, (SOF) which was then reviewed by the EW during a face to face interview with the client. After the interview, the EW would take the information given on the SOF and any supporting documents necessary to determine eligibility for all programs applied for. It was not unusual for an EW to complete up to fifteen interviews per week, leaving little time to actually process the case work. Manual processing of case work was labor intensive and most cases took forty-five days to process, the maximum allowed by state regulations. Forty-five days is a long time to wait to receive benefits. When the different SAWS systems were being developed it was common thinking among administrators of human services departments that automation would significantly decrease the forty-five day processing time. Unfortunately, the expectation of one day service delivery disregarded the necessity of obtaining appropriate documentation of eligibility which usually takes several days. As stated in Organizational culture and management capacity in a social welfare organization: A case study of Kansas, "...the amount of regulation attached to administration of most federally funded social welfare programs has remained constant or even increased. The volume and complexity of regulation, particularly in income maintenance programs, greatly adds to administrative overhead costs." (Burtless 1990 as cited in Snyder, 1995)

In an effort to determine if a CalWIN county is better off now with CalWIN or prior to CalWIN this paper will look at information and statistics on benefit issuance for the CalWORKs program in Yolo County.

The researcher for this paper has extensive knowledge of welfare programs and SAWS systems, having worked in welfare for twenty-two years. She worked for twenty years in an ISAWS county and was involved in the conversion from manual to automated processing in that county. During her employment in that county she also conducted research on both the C-IV and CalWIN systems providing hands on knowledge of both systems. She currently is employed as an assistant director over eligibility programs in Yolo County, a CalWIN county.

Hypothesis:

The Hypothesis for this research paper is Yolo County's use of the CalWIN system in determining CalWORKs eligibility costs less per case than determining CalWORKs eligibility manually in Yolo County.

Independent Variable: Use of the automated eligibility system CalWIN in Yolo County

Dependent Variable: Decreased cost per Yolo County CalWORKs application processed in CalWIN compared to manual processing

Dependent Variable: Decreased cost per Yolo County CalWORKs ongoing case processed in CalWIN compared to manual processing

Sub Questions:

1. Has there been a 5% decrease in Full Time Equivalents (FTE) time studying (charging) to the CalWORKs program when compared to prior to the implementation of CalWIN?
2. Has there been a 5% increase in CalWORKs applications being processed since the implementation of CalWIN when compared to prior to CalWIN.

3. Has there been a 5% decrease in the occurrence of incorrect payment of benefits since the implementation of CalWIN when compared to incorrect payments issued prior to CalWIN.
4. Has the interview for initial applicants of the CalWORKs program become easier and decreased in time since the implementation of CalWIN when compared to intake interviews prior to CalWIN

Definition of terms:

1. Yolo County shall mean the Yolo County Department of Employment and Social Services.
2. The California Work Oportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program shall mean the cash assistance component of the CalWORKs program administered in Yolo County.
3. California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Information Network (CalWIN) shall mean the CalWIN state automated welfare system as utilized in Yolo County
4. Prior to CalWIN shall mean the Fiscal Year 2002-2003
5. With Calwin shall mean the Fiscal Year 2007-2008
6. The year 2003 shall mean the Fiscal Year 2002-2003
7. The year 2008 shall mean the Fiscal Year 2007-2008
8. Manual processing shall mean the process in use in Yolo County prior to implementation of the CalWIN system
9. Application shall mean an application submitted to Yolo County requesting CalWORKs assistance and will be referred to as CalWORKs intake cases.
10. Ongoing case shall mean a Yolo County CalWORKs case that has been granted and is maintained each month by an EW
11. Eligibility Worker (EW) shall mean those employees in Yolo County responsible for processing CalWORKs applications and maintaining ongoing CalWORKs
12. Public Assistance Specialist shall mean the same as eligibility worker
13. Overpayments shall mean CalWORKs payments issued to ineligible cases or an amount more than the applicant/recipient is entitled to.
14. Pending applications shall mean those applications not disposed of within the month of receipt
15. Applicant shall mean the person applying for CalWORKs
16. Recipient shall mean people already receiving CalWORKs benefits.

Delimitations:

This paper will look at the cost of CalWIN in processing Yolo County's CalWORKs cases. It will not look at the cost of other programs such as Welfare-To-Work, Food Stamps, or Medical. It will also not look at other counties costs, the cost of CalWIN vendors, or the cost of attending CalWIN meetings.

Assumptions:

For purposes of this research paper it is assumed that there were no significant changes in the Yolo County CalWORKs program other than the implementation of the CalWIN system, that all workers received adequate training on the CalWIN system and CalWORKs program, that overpayments were identified by the workers both before and after CalWIN implementation and that

Importance of the Study:

This study is being conducted to determine if the CalWIN system is cost and process efficient for the Yolo County CalWORKs program. Many times automation is seen as more cost and process efficient without evaluating how the system actually affects case processing and costs in individual counties. California counties are now split into four automated welfare systems. The State has set a goal to have all California counties on one of two systems. When the decision of whether or not to stay with the CalWIN system or transfer to another is made, Yolo County needs to know if CalWIN has met the expectations of administrators by improving the efficiency of the administration of the CalWORKs program as stated by Department of Employment Services Interim Director Diana

Williams in a letter to the Yolo County Board of Supervisors dated January 10, 2006, "It is our belief that automation will ultimately provide a better service delivery system to persons in need of assistance and will result in increased accuracy of eligibility and benefit calculations."(Williams, 2006) This study will attempt to determine if this belief is correct.

Literature Review:

A literature review was conducted on state automated welfare systems in an attempt to discover information on the effects of benefit issuance and application processing timeliness and accuracy. The reviews will be divided into three categories. The first category will be from the early years of welfare automation and the expectations of a state automated welfare system, the second category will look at literature dedicated to the automated welfare systems after implementation, and the last category will from the perspective of welfare and other advocates.

Welfare Automation, the Early Years:

In 1981 the New York Times published an article titled "Computerized Welfare System Is Hailed by Officials in Wisconsin, regarding Wisconsin's newest state automated welfare system. The system was anticipated to increase efficiency in both the initial application phase and in determining eligibility to benefits accurately. The article stated "The state should save about 3.9 million a year in administrative costs and an additional $15 million in erroneous payments to ineligible recipients by 1982..." (Sheppard, 1981). The Wisconsin state administrators postulated that a computerized system would eliminate any inequality or inconsistency in benefit eligibility determination or benefit calculation citing program policy discrepancies between offices. Another assertion was the inability of staff to determine the correct eligibility and benefit amounts.

The computer system was seen as the answer to these issues, by determining eligibility for multiple programs based on the data input by the worker. The state anticipated expanding on the computer system at a later date with the assumption that the more uses the computer system had the greater the cost savings of conducting business in the welfare office. (Sheppard, 1981)

The State of California also had high expectations of its SAWS. In 1996, California's first CIO, John Flynn, stated the four systems to be used in the state would allow for information sharing between counties regarding case records when welfare recipients relocated. The processing of applications will be more efficient and allow for easier and quicker eligibility determinations (Bartholomew, 1996). Although it was originally the intent of the California four SAWS to be able to transfer information electronically, the only consortium that accomplished this is CalWIN, and CalWIN can only do this within the eighteen CalWIN counties. If a welfare recipient moves to any of the other forty counties in the state, a paper case must be sent. The California Legislative Analyst Office wrote in their 2008 Budget Analysis: County Administration and Automation Projects stated that "Currently, when a client moves to another county with a different system, client information must be recreated. (LAO, 2008). Another expectation of California SAWS was stated by the director of the health and welfare department's data center, Russ Bohart, who in 1996, stated , "SAWS should streamline the way counties process claims and handle applicants. Welfare workers are required to provide services within 45 days after citizens apply for them. "With the new system, we'll be able to deliver most services in less than a day." he speculated

that incidences of welfare fraud will reduce due to the new SAWS and the inability of recipients to receive welfare in two counties at the same time will be eliminated. (Bartholomew, 1996)

Another high level California official, Eloise Anderson, director of the California Department of Social Services, (CDSS) while defending the over spending on the states automated welfare systems by 455 million dollars, proclaimed that CDSS had reduced the administrative cost of CDSS "by 26% over the last five years." and that it was an "incorrect impression that we are wasting money in our administration of welfare." (Ellis,1995)

After SAWS Implementation:

A few studies have been done on automated welfare systems after their implementation. The article by Michael Robert Dennis titled Proletarian or Promethean? Impacts of Automation and Program Integration on Social Service Workers and Their Clients, (Dennis, 2006) discusses several aspects of the effects of automation in an Indiana county social services office. The article also discusses program integration, meaning the combining of cash, Food Stamps, and Medi-Cal from individual workers for each program into one generic worker who does all three. Program integration was also the goal of Wisconsin with their automated welfare system. One assertion the article makes is the importance of organizational structure and how it changes to accommodate technology in determining the technologies success. Program integration is an example of this. Dennis states the Indiana system "was to allow caseworkers to manage larger caseloads of clients; to facilitate the integration of the AFDC *(cash)*, Food Stamp,

and Medicaid programs for the first time; to reduce worker error; to foster sharing of data with other agencies; and to arrest fraud...," (Dennis, 2006) These expectations are also true of the CalWIN system implemented in Yolo County in 2005. As stated on the CalWIN website, the purpose of the CalWIN system is to automatically determine eligibility with the expressed intent of increasing accuracy and efficiency, decreasing the amount of time it takes for an applicant to receive benefits and reducing the number of incorrect benefits issued. (The CalWIN Vision, n.d.)

Dennis had been a training consultant in Indiana for their automated welfare system. After his job ended he conducted face to face interviews with case workers and supervisors to determine the impact of automation on them. He also used his own personal experience and knowledge for some of his assertions. There is discussion in the article about the length of time for the case manager to conduct an intake interview with an applicant. The article also discusses workers becoming disenfranchised and the problem some have in adapting to a machine dictating eligibility. Although a valid observation, this type of information will not be part of this research paper.

In the article *Integrated systems improve welfare delivery* (Peck, 2002) in discussing the LEADER system states "LEADER allows the county to notify residents of their welfare eligibility within a few hours. Before the system was installed, residents could wait up to 30 days to learn what programs they were eligible for and how much assistance they could receive from each program. With a caseload of approximately 1.5 million residents, Los Angeles County expects

the system to save taxpayers an estimated $83 million annually" (Peck 2002) The article also addresses another common assumption, that the automated system would reduce the need for EW's and their knowledge of welfare rules and regulations. "The system's eligibility determination and benefit calculation program incorporates complex rules for the county's different welfare programs, including CalWORKs...County employees only need to input welfare clients' information into the system once to determine which programs clients are eligible for and the amount of benefits they can receive from the various programs." (Peck, 2002) This philosophy would allow counties to not only have less staff but enable them to fill the positions with lower classifications and therefore less salary expense.

However, the complexity of welfare rules and regulations and their propensity for changing was vastly underestimated when making these assumptions. The SAWS integrates several public assistance programs including CalWORKs (cash), Food Stamps, Medi-Cal, Foster Care, and General Assistance. All programs have separate and sometimes conflicting rules and regulations adding to the difficulty of keeping the SAWS up to date.

Another perspective on automated welfare systems is by Rita C. Kidd, regarding California's Merced County, automated welfare system, Merced Automated Global Information Control (MAGIC) that was implemented between 1990 and 1992. Kidd reported that the implementation of MAGIC and the business process change of integrating eligibility workers to process all eligibility programs and eliminate the specialized worker who only processed one program,

saved Merced County administrative cost through a 7 percent reduction in staff even though caseloads had increase 47 percent. By 1995, it was determined through audits that Merced County had reduced its administrative cost from $602 per case in 1990 to $273 in 1994, showing a much lower cost than the average state cost of $431 per case for 1994. (Kidd, 1996)

Welfare Advocates and Others:

With over forty percent of the welfare cases in California, it's not surprising that CalWIN has garnered the attention of welfare advocates. Unfortunately the attention has been mostly negative. Welfare rights advocates have sent many letters to Yolo County Department of Employment and Social Services (DESS) regarding incorrect benefits issued or benefits not issued timely.

Essentially, the advocates think CalWIN is a hindrance to the counties using this system in meeting their obligation to the population in need of public assistance. As stated by Robert Newman attorney with the Western Center on Law and Poverty, "CalWIN is a misnomer. The computer program should be called CalLOSE, as in lose your benefits for no good reason, without notice or an opportunity to be heard."(Manatt,n.d.)

Welfare advocates and welfare rights organizations have raised their concerns regarding the efficiency and accuracy of the CalWIN system. In fact several welfare rights organizations, Legal Services of Northern California, Bay Area Legal Aid, the Coalition of California Welfare Rights, Manatt, Phelps & Phillips,

LLP, and the Western Center on Law and Poverty, have partnered in filing a lawsuit against the California State Department of Social Services. Additionally, the State of California is currently involved in a lawsuit regarding the same issues of incorrect and untimely benefits issued through the CalWIN system. The advocates state that CalWIN violates the Welfare and Institutions Code sections 10816-10824 which states:

> 10816. The system shall have the following goals:
> (a) Prompt and accurate verification of eligibility.
> (b) Accurate computation and timely disbursal of benefits for such public assistance programs.
> (c) Equitable, timely, and consistent treatment of recipients within each program.
> (d) Reduction of administrative complexity.
> (e) Strict enforcement of management and fiscal controls.
> (f) Collection of management information. (California W&I Codes)

A press release dated October 5, 2007, states the lawsuit, Sim Pich, et al. v. John A. Wagner, Director, California Department of Social Services; California Department of Social Services et al., was filed September 28, 2007, on behalf of several welfare recipients who either did not receive their benefits within the required time frames, were erroneously discontinued from benefits and therefore did not receive any, or received the wrong amounts of benefits. The press release clearly cites the CalWIN system as the cause for these benefit errors.

The advocates intend to provide sufficient evidence of the CalWIN systems inadequacies, including "supporting evidence from county employees themselves, because this computer system has so greatly impeded their ability to carry out their duties." (Manatt,n.d.)

In the December 2002 article titled CalWIN Versus LEADER: Have they Learned Anything? (Bermack, 2002) the focus is on the complexity of the system to the end user, an eligibility worker (EW). The system has numerous screens that must be completed and the eligibility worker must process through all the screens. This causes lengthy interviews, up to three hours, for clients applying for benefits. In fact, the client is screened for all eligibility programs regardless of the program actually applied for. The suspected reason for the system to mandate each screen must be processed is to alleviate the EW from the need to know welfare program regulations. The system in essence knows the regulations and processes the case accordingly. However, with automatic system regulation updates, the EW may not be made aware of the changes which could cause confusion. The forced screen processing and automatic regulation updates also eliminates decision making by the EW and changes the scope of the EW duties. (Bermack 2002)

Why Don't Automated Walfare Systems Save Money? (Kidd, May 1, 1996) This article discusses the findings of the Government Accounting Office (GAO) in two separate reports that automation of welfare programs has not produced a reduction in costs as anticipated. Kidd delves into the reasons for the failed expectations of welfare automation and offers her own perspective on the reasons for failure. She presents the argument that cost were not controlled during the implementation of the systems and also that no plans to determine success after implementation were developed. Additionally she surmises that the systems first put in place in the 1980's and 1990's have not produced the desired

results and are now needing to be replaced due to age. These social service organizations needing to replace their computer system must determine where the funding will come from now that they must rely on a block grant instead of additional federal funds. Kidd discusses the inability of welfare departments to revamp the current business processes either before or simultaneously with the implementation of automation. Bad internal processes will not be fixed with a computer system. She offers three suggestions to counteract what she sees as bad practices in social services computer systems, incentives for administrators who change processes for better use of the system and penalties for those who do not, training on business process reengineering and systems flexible enough to be reprogrammed easily with required program regulation changes, and a reduction in the federal governments bureaucratic requirements on the states. (Kidd, May 1996)

Methodology:

With CalWIN already being an implemented state automated welfare system in Yolo County, this research paper used the ex post facto research tradition and includes both qualitative and quantitative data in an effort to determine the validity of the hypothesis. The quantitative data will be for the years 2003 and 2008 to include state and county statistical reports, the qualitative data will include information gathered through a focus group interview, and a survey questionnaire gathered in September 2008 and October 2008.

Quantitative Data: Statistical Reports:

In an effort to answer the hypothesis subquestion, "has there been a 5% decrease in the occurrence of incorrect payment of benefits and in dollar amounts of CalWORKs overpayments since the implementation of CalWIN when compared to incorrect payments issued prior to CalWIN," statistics will be extracted from the report titled CA 812 retrieved from the California State Department of Social Services website under reports, on the number of overpayments in Yolo County which will show the number of incorrect benefits issued each year, specifically this paper extracted statistics from column #2 a and b titled "O/P identified during the quarter, claims/amounts" for each quarter of the FY 2002-03 and FY 2007-08. Figure one shows the results of the extraction of this information.

The second subquestion, "Has there been a 5% decrease in Full Time Equivalents (FTE) time studying (charging) to the CalWORKs program when compared to prior to the implementation of CalWIN?" will be answered through

the use of information gathered from the state report CalWORKs Cash Grant Caseload Movement Report, CA 237 CW, used to determine the number of initial CalWORKs applications processed each month. The number for each month will be taken from item number 4 on the report, "Disposed of". The number of applications processed each month will be compiled into a number for each quarter to coincide with the County Expense Claim. The information from the Yolo County County Expense Claim (CEC) shows the number of Full Time Equivalents claimed against Yolo County's CalWORKs allocation for initial CalWORKs applications, thereby providing the number of applications processed by each worker charging to the CalWORKs program before and after CalWIN implementation. A similar process will be done for the ongoing caseloads, using the same state and county reports, but using the statistical information provided for the ongoing caseloads, specifically item #8 Cases open during the month, this figure along with the figure from item #4 will provide the total number of CalWORKs cases for each month. The number of FTE's used to process these cases will be obtained through the CEC . This will provide the number of FTE's per ongoing case necessary before and after CalWIN implementation. When completed for both the FY 2002-03 and FY 2007-08, a comparison can be made on the number of FTE's necessary to complete both intake applications and ongoing cases both before and after CalWIN implementation and whether or not there was an increase or decrease in FTE per casae.

In addition this report will use item no. 5 "Applications Movement Report, CA 237 CW which is the number pending" on the CalWORKs Cash Grant Caseload of

applications not processed during the month the to determine the number of CalWORKs intakes not processed each month. Comparing the increase or decrease in the number of applications processed each month before and after the implementation of CalWIN will indicate whether applicants of CalWORKs received their benefits more timely after CalWIN implementation and will answer subquestion number 3:

> Has there been a 5% increase in CalWORKs applications being processed within the state required 45 days since the implementation of CalWIN when compared to prior to CalWIN.

Qualitative Data:

There is no quantitative data available for processes before the implementation of CalWIN. Therefore, in order to answer the question, Has the interview time for initial applicants of the CalWORKs program decreased since the implementation of CalWIN when compared to the interview time prior to CalWIN, it was determined a focus group could answer this question.

Focus Group:

A focus group meeting was held on September 30, 2008. There were ten people invited to the group and seven who attended. The attendees were selected based on their experience in the CalWORKs program in Yolo County before and after the implementation of the CalWIN system. Their experience in the CalWORKs program varied as did their level of responsibility in the county. Those selected were informed of the reasons for the focus group meeting and that attendance was voluntary. A consent form was obtained by all who attended the focus group. The people attending the focus group either currently hold or

have held the following classifications: Public Assistance Specialist (PAS) I's which is the entry level position in the series, PAS II which is the journey level position, usually reached after six months as a PAS I, PAS III's which is the lead worker position and must be applied for and accepted based on job knowledge and competency, supervisor, supervises the work of all PAS' regardless of the level, manager, who oversees the entire CalWORKs eligibility program, and administrative analyst who writes policy and procedures for the CalWORKs program.

Of those that attended, their CalWORKs experience prior to CalWIN was as follows: four were a Public Assistance Specialist (PAS) I/II, one was a PAS III, and two were supervisors or above, experience with CalWIN, as follows: two were PAS II's, three were PAS III's, and one of those PAS III's is now a supervisor, and one is an administrative analyst, two were supervisors and one supervisor was now a manager.

Survey Questionnaire:

A survey questionnaire (Appendix A) was also distributed to those selected based on their experience in the CalWORKs program in Yolo County before and after the implementation of the CalWIN system. Their experience in the CalWORKs program varied as did their level of responsibility in the county. Those selected were informed of the reasons for the questionnaire and that completing it was voluntary. A consent form (Appendix B) was obtained by all who returned a completed questionnaire. Some of the questionnaire respondents also attended the focus group meeting but not all respondents did. The survey

was distributed prior to the focus group meeting, some in person by the researcher and others through the in-house mail routing system at DESS. Some were returned at the focus group, others to the researcher at various times.

Data Analysis:

Overpayments:

The data extracted from California State report CA 812 shows the number of claims and dollar amounts of CalWORKs overpayments identified and reported to the California Department of Social Services by Yolo County each quarter in the years 2003 and 2008. A comparison of each quarter's number of overpayments, amount of overpayments, and total overpayments for each year, 2003 and 2008, provided information on which year, 2003 which was prior to CalWIN implementation or 2008 which was with the use of CalWIN, had the highest number identified and the highest dollar amount of overpayments thereby providing statistics to answer the question,

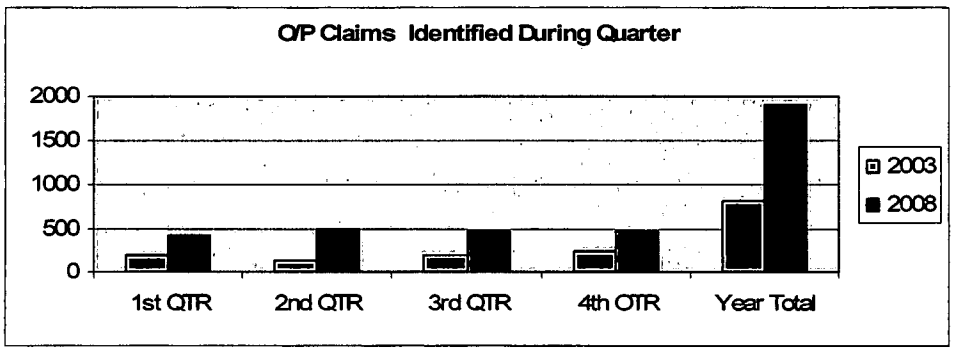
> Has there been a 5% decrease in the occurrence of incorrect payment of benefits since the implementation of CalWIN when compared to incorrect payments issued prior to CalWIN.

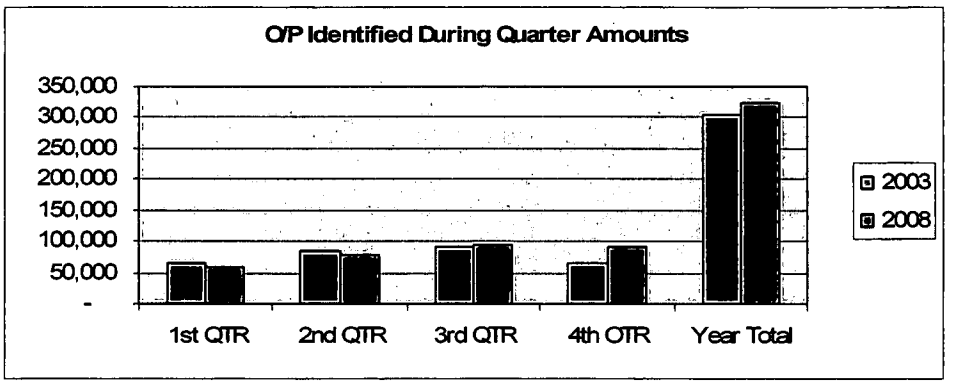
Overpayments in CalWORKs are caused by issuing more benefits than the client is entitled to. There are many reasons for an overpayment and can be caused by either the client not providing enough or incorrect information to the PAS or the PAS not processing casework in time to reduce the CalWORKs benefits or incorrectly determining the amount of CalWORKs benefits the client is entitled to. Table one shows the CalWORKs overpayment (O/P) claims and amounts for the 2003 and 2008 years. Figure one illustrates these figures in a graph.

Table One:

O/P Claims Identified			O/P Amount Identified		
	2003	2008		2003	2008
1st QTR	202	435	1st QTR	63,489	59,617
2nd QTR	147	497	2nd QTR	83,608	77,169
3rd QTR	206	483	3rd QTR	91,635	95,554
4th OTR	253	484	4th OTR	64,667	90,900
Year Total	808	1,899	Year Total	303,399	323,240
Difference		135% Increase	Difference		6.54% Increase

Figure One:





Application Processing and Full Time Equivalents (FTE):

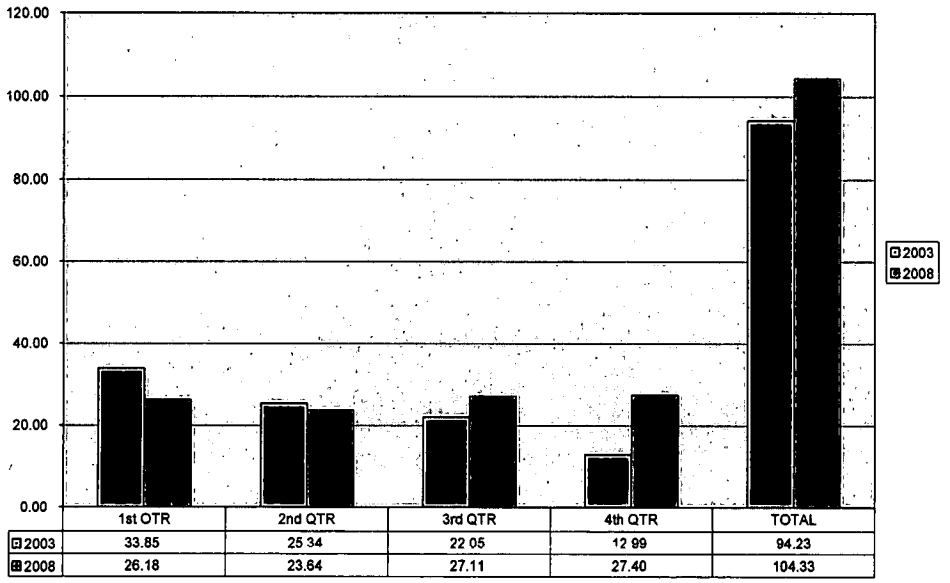
Caseloads:

The data retrieved from the Yolo County, County Expense Claim, for both the 2003 and 2008 years will be analyzed to determine the answer to the subquestion:

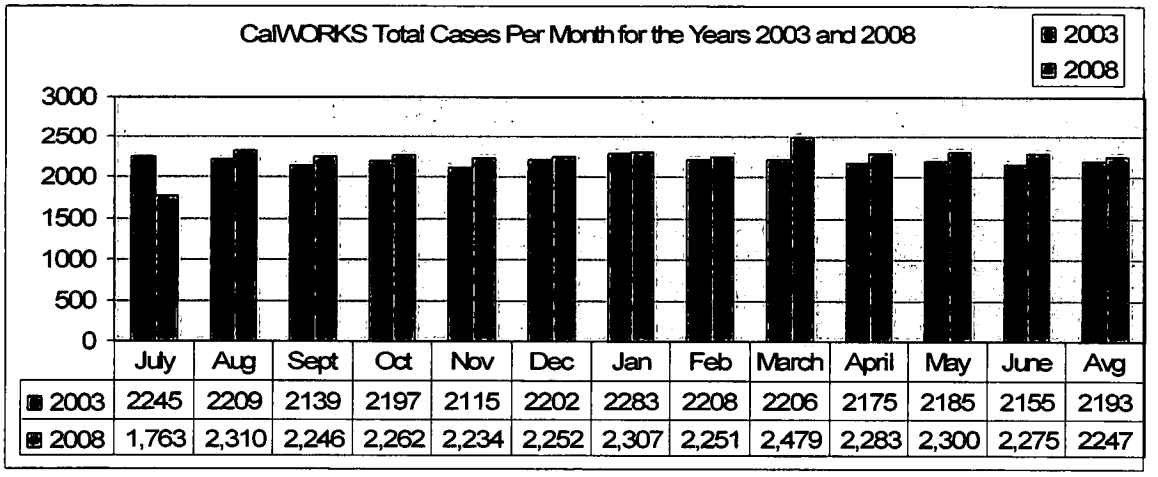
> Has there been a 5% decrease in Full Time Equivalents (FTE) time studying (charging) to the CalWORKs program when compared to prior to the implementation of CalWIN?

The county expense claim (CEC) is the mechanism for each California county to obtain reimbursement from the California Department of Social Services for the work done in social services programs and to ensure that each programs allocation is not over spent. County workers complete quarterly "time studies" showing the amount of time spent in each program section. One program can have several subsections and are determined through coding of the sections. The finance division of Yolo County takes the time studies and converts the time indicated in each category into the corresponding code to determine which subsection of the program to charge. Figure one will show the number of FTE's charging to the CalWORKs program for each year. Figure two will show the number of CalWORKs cases for each year. Table two will show the increase or decrease in the number of FTE's in proportion to the number of CalWORKs cases for each year.

Full Time Equivalent 2003 & 2008 Comparison Chart



	1st QTR	2nd QTR	3rd QTR	4th QTR	TOTAL
2003	33.85	25.34	22.05	12.99	94.23
2008	26.18	23.64	27.11	27.40	104.33



	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	Avg
2003	2245	2209	2139	2197	2115	2202	2283	2208	2206	2175	2185	2155	2193
2008	1,763	2,310	2,246	2,262	2,234	2,252	2,307	2,251	2,479	2,283	2,300	2,275	2247

FTE per CalWORKs Case		
	2003	**2008**
Average Caseload	2193	2247
Average FTE for the Year	94.23	104.33
Average Number of Cases Per FTE	23	21
Average Number FTE Per Case	.043	.046
Difference		7% Increase

Applications:

The information on the number of FTE's time studying to the intake function was used to determine if the proportion of FTE's required to process initial CalWORKs applications has increased or decreased when compared to the average number of applications being processed each quarter. These statistics will provide information to answer the subquestion:

> Has there been a 5% increase in CalWORKs applications being processed within the month of receipt since the implementation of CalWIN when compared to prior to CalWIN.

Table three and figure three show the comparison of 2003 applications processed to the number of 2008 applications processed using this methodology.

Quarterly Number of FTE's per Application								
2003	2003 FTE's	Apps Rec'd	FTE per App	QRT	2008 FTE's	Apps Rec'd	FTE per App	
1st OTR	4.00	223.33	0.01791	**1st OTR**	5.11	223.67	0.02285	
2nd QTR	5.24	221.67	0.02364	**2nd QTR**	6.97	210.67	0.03309	
3rd QTR	4.49	203.33	0.02208	**3rd QTR**	7.13	302.00	0.02361	
4th QTR	2.54	194.33	0.01307	**4th QTR**	6.61	227.67	0.02903	
Avg	4	211	0.01931	Avg	6	241	0.02678	
Differnce							37% Increase	

Pending Applications:

	2003				2008			
	Apps	**Pending**	**Percentage Pending**		**Apps**	**Pending**	**Percentage Pending**	
July	253	76		0.30	205	145		0.71
Aug	222	83		0.37	254	159		0.63
Sept	195	82		0.42	212	151		0.71
Oct	231	103		0.45	220	114		0.52
Nov	201	74		0.37	205	128		0.62
Dec	233	85		0.36	207	112		0.54
Jan	225	69		0.31	250	121		0.48
Feb	184	77		0.42	214	135		0.63
March	201	89		0.44	442	308		0.70
April	182	90		0.49	233	298		1.28
May	178	105		0.59	227	304		1.34
June	223	133		0.60	223	318		1.43
Avg	211	89		0.4269	241	191		0.7988
Difference								87% Increase

Focus Group

The focus group started with the question, "was case processing easier prior to CalWIN or with CalWIN"?

The conversation began with a current supervisor stating that the system used prior to CalWIN, Case Data Systems (CDS), had easier data entry. That system

was not an automated welfare system but a data entry system and therefore they had to complete the eligibility budget manually, interviews with clients usually lasted sixty minutes, and more paper was used. Others chimed in with agreement and stated that there was less paper work after CalWIN, especially with client correspondence which CalWIN does automatically for them and they had to do by hand in CDS. Also mentioned was CalWIN doing the budgeting for them which was seen as a plus.

There were a few who saw the use of paper to be about the same amount, while CalWIN eliminated the need for some paper work, CalWIN created more processes and it's own paperwork.

The majority of the group saw CDS as an easier system, with 16 screens to complete compared to the 50-60 screens in CalWIN, to use in processing CalWORKs applications. Also, there is more work for the supervisor or PAS III who must review 100 % the application processing work of all PAS I/II's compared to CDS which required a review approximately 10 application per month per worker.

It was stated that CDS did not have to be tweaked often as compared to CalWIN that does not always process eligibility rules correctly and can take months or even years to correct.

The group thought that all workers using the CalWIN system needed to know eligibility regulations better than with CDS. This was seen as a positive effect of CalWIN. Also, with the implementation of CalWIN, it was discovered that many times the regulations were being applied incorrectly, so CalWIN allowed the

county to correct errors that were being made in the issuance or calculation of benefits.

The question, "Do you think clients are affected by the use of CalWIN?" was asked of the group. They stated the 100% required review in CalWIN mentioned above often times caused a delay in authorization of cases and therefore issuance of benefits. Also, the interactive interview time is longer for the client but the client also does not have to fill out the 16 page statement of facts as they did prior to CalWIN. So even though the interview time maybe longer the actual time for the client is shorter and less frustrating. They also said more questions were asked during the interview as prompted by CalWIN and therefore more information was acquired to determine correct eligibility and that fraudulent information was found easier.

There was concern that some PAS' tended to focus on the computer system and filling out the screens and not on the person applying for the benefits, that the interactive interview is not as personable, and has less eye contact than before. When asked the question if they would like to go back to the CDS system, three said yes and four said no. Some said they would like a system provides the benefits of CalWIN but is less cumbersome, provides flexibility in selection of information that goes in, and has been tested in another county or state.

Survey Questionnaire Analysis:

An analysis of the nine survey questionnaire responses revealed the following,

Five of the nine respondents, or 56% of the respondents, had between one and five years experience in the CalWORKs program before CalWIN implementation, two, or 22% had between six and ten years, one or 11%, had more than ten years experience, and one or 11% with less than one year. This shows that the questionnaire included a variety of experiences in Yolo County's CalWORKs program prior to the implementation of CalWIN and therefore would be more likely to have varying opinions on the effects of CalWIN in determining eligibility. The respondents also varied in level of positions held in Yolo County. The responses for questions pertaining to the length and ease of interviews and processing applications before and after CalWIN, are reflected in Table Four below.

Table Four:

#2. How long were the average CalWORKs eligibility determination interviews conducted with clients prior to implementation of Calwin				
Less than 30 minutes	30-45 minutes	45-60 minutes	Greater than 60 minutes	
0	6	2	1	
0%	67%	22%	11%	
#3. How long were the average CalWORKs eligibility determination interviews conducted with clients after the implementation of Calwin				
Less than 30 minutes	30-45 minutes	45-60 minutes	Greater than 60 minutes	
0	0	4	5	
0%	0%	44%	56%	
#4. CalWORKs eligibility determination interviews were easier prior to the implementation of CalWIN				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
0	2	5	1	1
0%	22%	56%	11%	11%
#5. CalWORKs eligibility determination interviews were easier after the implementation of CalWIN				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
1	6	1	0	1
11%	67%	11%	0	11%

#6. Disposition of applications was quicker prior to the implementation of CalWIN				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
0	1	3	1	4
0%	11%	33%	11%	44%
#7. Disposition of applications was quicker after the implementation of CalWIN				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
0	4	1	0	4
0%	44%	11%	0%	44%
#8. I prefer interviewing and processing CalWORKs applications prior to implementation of CalWIN				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
0	3	5	1	1
0%	33%	56%	11%	11%
#9. I prefer interviewing and processing CalWORKs applications with the CalWIN system				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
1	4	3	0	1
11%	44%	33%	0%	11%

Results and Findings:

Overpayments:

The reports analyzed on CalWORKs overpayment claims shows an increase of 135% from 2003 to 2008. There could be many reasons for this increase. For instance prior to CalWIN workers may not have been identifying all the overpayments that were occurring. The CalWIN system would identify overpayments through the system and may be more difficult for the worker to ignore and therefore the worker processes a larger number. A more in depth research, which is out of the scope of this paper, would need to be made to determine if the overpayments identified in 2008 were for the years with CalWIN or prior to CalWIN. The overpayment amounts also increased for 2008 by 6.54%.

With this increase, the answer to subquestion 3 regarding a 5% decrease in overpayments since CalWIN must be no.

Full Time Equivalents and Applications:

The research shows a 7% increase in the number of average FTE per case from 2003 to 2008. In addition the research shows a 37% increase in the number of FTE's for each CalWORKs application processed and an 87% increase in the number of CalWORKs applications not processed in the month of receipt. This means we are using more FTE's per application received but the applications are not being processed as quickly as they were in 2003 with less FTE's. These figures clearly show that implementation of CalWIN has not decreased the number of FTE's per case nor has it increased the applications processed each month. Therefore the answers to subquestions 1 and 2 are negative.

Survey Questionnaire and Focus Group:

As shown in Table Four on the previous page, 67% of the survey respondents said CalWORKS eligibility determination interviews prior to CalWIN were between 30 to 45 minutes in length, 56% of respondents said CalWORKS eligibility determination interviews with CalWIN were greater than 60 minutes in length, 56% agreed with the statement CalWORKs eligibility determination interviews were easier prior the implementation of CalWIN, 67% disagreed with the statement CalWORKs eligibility determination interviews were easier after the implementation of CalWIN, 44% did not know and 33% agreed that the disposition of applications was quicker prior to the implementation of CalWIN,

44% did not know and 44% disagreed with the stated that disposition of applications was quicker after the implementation of CalWIN, 56% agreed to the statement, I prefer interviewing and processing CalWORKs applications prior to the implementation of CalWIN, while 44% stated they disagreed with the statement I prefer interviewing and processing CalWORKs applications with the CalWIN system, 33% agreed with this statement. It appears from these figures that the respondents are not fully satisfied with CalWIN, but neither are they completely disillusioned with the system. The responses that are positive to processes prior to CalWIN are mostly in the moderate category of agree and no more than one and often zero in the strongly agree. On the other side, those processes with CalWIN, the responses are more negative to CalWIN but not strongly so. Most are in the disagreed with category and the strongly disagree category was only selected twice. This shows a displeasure of the CalWIN system by some users but also a like of the CalWIN system by other users. Most interesting were the responses to the length of interviews, with 100% of respondents saying that eligibility determination interviews with the CalWIN system took 45 minutes or longer. When compared to the 67% who thought that these interviews took between 30 and 45 minutes before CalWIN.

The Focus group agreed that interviews now take longer with CalWIN but thought that the client not having to fill out the statement of facts which can take an hour or so, more than compensated for the longer interviews. The group also thought that CalWIN was more accurate and therefore there would be less incorrect benefits going to the client. Most of the group agreed that the CalWIN

system was difficult to maneuver through but most had adjusted to this. All agreed that regulation knowledge was more necessary with CalWIN.

With the information from the survey and focus group, it has been determined that although the specific intake interview time has increased, to about 60 minutes from 30-45 minutes the actual time to the client, i.e. not having to fill out the paper information which was an hour or more, equals less time and therefore the answer to subquestion 4 is yes, the interview has become easier and time has decreased overall with the implementation of CalWIN.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

The analysis of the quantitative data does not substantiate the hypothesis of this research paper which was "Yolo County's use of the CalWIN system in determining CalWORKs eligibility costs less per case than determining CalWORKs eligibility manually in Yolo County." Even though the qualitative data regarding subquestion 4 was substantiated the other subquestions were not and in fact the data overwhelmingly showed that the use of CalWIN has not reduced the cost of processing CalWORKs cases. Overpayment claims have increased by 135%, the need for full time equivalents has increased 7% for all cases and 37% for applications. Most astounding was the increase of applications not being processed within the month of receipt. Applications left pending each month increased 87% from 2003 to 2008, even with the 37% increase in FTE's processing the applications. This figure directly relates to the issuance of benefits to our clients and clearly more clients are having to wait longer to receive their

benefits. So, how should Yolo County handle this information? Here are a few recommendations:

1. Conduct more research to determine if the above research holds true for other programs such as Food Stamps and Medi-Cal and if other CalWIN counties are also experiencing the same increases. Depending on the outcome of this additional research it may be determined that CalWORKs staff are in need of additional training with the CalWIN system.
2. The focus group and survey questionnaire revealed that navigating through the CalWIN system is not easy. The county should research ways to ease navigating through the system, such as promoting CalWIN going to a web based application. The article *States Back Off Large Welfare System Projects* in Washington Technology (Welsh, 2000) suggests that many states will large automated welfare systems needing replacement are looking at systems with access through the Internet, or web based as a means of controlling costs. (Welsh, 2000) The county should also look at integrating the duties of the eligibility workers. One worker determining eligibility for all programs through CalWIN will make navigating the system easier. In fact this is one of the benefits of the CalWIN system as stated by EDS, "CalWIN...features allow county workers to coordinate benefits across programs to better align services delivered to clients. (PR Newswire, 2000). By not integrating the public assistance programs in Yolo

County we are working against the CalWIN system and not realizing its full potential.

3. Research if it would be fiscally prudent to migrate to another SAWS. This would be difficult for one county to accomplish but if other CalWIN counties find their stats to be comparable there could be a coalition of CalWIN counties promoting a change in systems. In fact the California Legislative Analyst Office (LAO, 2008) stated in the 2008 Budget Analysis: County Administration and Automation Projects in promoting a two SAWS consortium for California stated "While it is difficult to quantify total savings, reducing the number of consortia will result in ongoing annual savings for system changes that are currently costing between $10 million and $20 million per system." (LAO,2008) Yolo County may find an opening to transfer to another SAWS consortium should the LAO recommendations come to fruition.
4. Prior to any SAWS being chosen, counties should have workers use test case scenarios to determine how the system works at the line level. Years ago, states and counties did not have this option as most systems were either brand new or still in the development stage. Now that most states have SAWS up and running, having staff work on different systems will be an asset when making a determination on which system to chose. However, the county should keep in mind that taking an existing SAWS and making significant changes to that system can have dire results. As stated in Governmental Information

System Problems and Failures: A Preliminary Review, problems with existing systems occur when significant modifications are made to those systems as experienced when Florida based their system on Ohio's existing system but then modified to the point of not functioning. (Rocheleau, n.d.)

5. Vendors who promise a State Automated Welfare System that will save money and time need to be held accountable by including a validation of this assertion in the contract. Those that cannot perform as promised should have funding withheld until they follow through on their contractual obligations.

Summary:

Automated welfare systems have been implemented in all 58 California counties along with many other states. The primary purpose of an automated welfare system is to reduce the cost of administering public assistance programs through what is seen as a more efficient way to process applications and more accurately issue benefits. However, if the system that is chosen is not user friendly to the line staff who are actually processing case actions then the system becomes more of a barrier to case processing and benefit issuance instead of the panacea. Automation that does not meet the needs of every day case processing becomes just another barrier that must be worked around and dealt with. Administrator looking at automated systems should keep the user friendliness of the system in mind when making a selection to get the most efficiency in processing cases.

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Appendix A:

Survey Questionnaire

Survey on processing CalWORKs applications and benefit issuance prior to CalWIN implementation and after CalWIN implementation

1. Which position most accurately reflects your position in which you gained your CalWORKs and CalWIN knowledge.

Public Assistance Specialist I/II Public Assistance Specialist III

Employment and Social Services Program Supervisor Manager

2. How long were you involved in determing CalWORKs eligibility prior to the implementation of CalWIN:
   Please circle one

Less than one year 1-5 years 6-10 years greater than 10 years NA

3. How long were the average CalWORKs eligibility determination interviews conducted with clients prior to implementation of CalWIN:

Less than30 minutes 30-45 minutes 45-60 minutes greater than 60 minutes

4. How long were the average CalWORKs eligibility determination interviews conducted with clients after implementation of CalWIN:

Less than30 minutes 30-45 minutes 45-60 minutes greater than 60 minutes

5. CalWORKs eligibility determination interviews were easier prior to the implementation of CalWIN

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree Don't Know

6. CalWORKs eligibility determination interviews were easier after the implementation of CalWIN

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree Don't Know

7. Disposition of applications was quicker prior to the implementation of CalWIN

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree Don't Know

8. Disposition of applications was quicker after the implementation of CalWIN

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree Don't Know

9. I prefer interviewing and processing CalWORKs applications prior to implementation of CalWIN.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree Don't Know

10. I prefer interviewing and processing CalWORKs applications with the CalWIN system.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree Don't Know

Appendix B

Consent Form:

You have been invited to participate in a research study conducted by Nancy O'Hara, a student from Golden Gate University, Executive Masters of Public Administration program. This study will examine the process effectiveness of the CalWIN system in determining CalWORKS eligibility and issuing CalWORKs benefits in Yolo County. You were selected to participate based on your CalWORKs eligibility experience prior to and after CalWIN implementation.

If you decide to participate, I will be asking you to attend a focus group meeting with other study participants and complete a survey on CalWORKS eligibility determination interviews and benefit processing before and after CalWIN implementation. There is no cost involved to the participants.

The names of those attending the focus group will not be used in the study, only the content of the meeting. Survey responses will not include your name. All information provided will remain confidential. Results of the focus group meeting and survey will contribute to a dissertation and will be made public through the Golden Gate University library.

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Yolo County Department of Employment and Social Services (DESS). If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact Nancy O'Hara, DESS, (530)-661-2945 or Dr. Alan R. Roper, Ageno School of Business, Golden Gate University, 536 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94105.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you have received a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies.

Print Name:_____

Signature:_____

Date:_____