

wdtip

UPDATE



CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES

note from **DEPUTY DIRECTOR,**

Welfare to Work Division



California Department of Social Services

Within the next year, what statewide project will create a new tool that will provide county staff with a streamlined approach to tracking Welfare Reform time limits? The answer: the Welfare Data Tracking Implementation Project (WDTIP). The WDTIP system (we know the name is a tongue twister)

is being developed by the Health and Welfare Data Center (HWDC), with the assistance of the counties, and is sponsored by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).

I can already see you asking yourself, "So, what will this new tool do for me?" Well, imagine a world in which you can peer into a computer screen and ...VOILA`...see exactly how long an applicant's or recipient's Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) and California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) clocks have been ticking, adjusted (of course) to account for exemptions and exceptions. Let's say, for example, that you are interviewing an applicant to determine eligibility. You'll know from MEDS that your client has received CalWORKs for the past 14 months in, let's say, Merced County. What you can't tell from MEDS, however, is how many of those months actually count toward the 18/24-month and 60-month CalWORKs/TANF clocks, how many months prior to MEDS history your client received aid and whether he or she has passed or is approaching the 18/24-month CalWORKs time limit. You might, at this point, call Merced County to try and determine which months actually counted toward the clocks, which would give you a little more information. Or, you could simply access the WDTIP system through the MEDS main menu and see fully calculated time clock information, displayed with data dating all the way back to November, 1996.

When you view the screen, it will tell you your client's 18/24-month clock has ticked for 19 months (based on the Welfare to Work plan sign date), and that the 60-month clock has ticked for 25 months. No need to research the exemptions and exceptions, call counties, or rely entirely on your client's memory. All the clocks (including the TANF 60-month) will be fully calculated and the information will be displayed for you.

In addition to time on aid tracking, the WDTIP system will provide other statewide information to help determine an individual's eligibility to CalWORKs and Food Stamps, including:

- An individual's Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) status, including the ABAWD start date and other ABAWD data
- Diversion payment amount and the adjusted time clocks based on diversion information
- Sanction data including the reason and effective date

We invite you to visit the WDTIP Website at www.wdtip.cahwnet.gov for more information about what you can expect over the next year. Feel free to call any of the key contact people listed in this Information Letter with any specific questions you have. We welcome your suggestions and feedback.

*Bruce Wagstaff
Deputy Director,
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status check**APPLICATION TEAM**

Using information gathered during the SAWS-TA project, the Application Team identified the functionality necessary to support the WDTIP system for data tracking of welfare recipients throughout California. This functionality was captured in the form of requirements, and these requirements were expanded and validated through the Joint Requirements Planning (JRP) sessions. Over 40 representatives attended these sessions from the counties and

California State agencies. The JRP Minutes have been posted on our website. The minutes include the identification of requirements, assumptions and action items.

Currently, the Application Team is developing preliminary design specifications to identify the business rules and data elements associated with the requirements. In addition, interviews will be conducted with both county and State agencies to answer any outstanding questions related to the requirements. The preliminary design specifications, as well as the information obtained during informal interviews, will serve as the base from which the system design will occur.

colophon**Editor**

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the in's & OUT'S

If you haven't notice lately, a lot has been going on at the HWDC. To help bring everyone up to speed, here are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions:

Q. What happened to the SAWS-TA?

A. The initial the SAWS-TA project was reorganized in February 1999 and continues today as three separate projects. The first project was named Pre-SAWS, which concluded in February 1999. Pre-SAWS resulted in the establishment of the SAWS Information System (SIS) database that captures statewide welfare-related information. This database is currently in production and accessible to all California counties. The second project is named WDTIP and is appropriately described in this Information Letter. The third project is named CalSERV and continues the work on the electronic communication mechanism enabling welfare consortia to exchange welfare recipient information. This project is scheduled to commence in July 1999.

Q. Will the WDTIP replace SIS?

A. Yes and no. Right now you access SIS through MEDS, which you will continue to do. In the future, the functionality of SIS will be enhanced

to include not only demographic and individual program history (as it does now), but also the calculated TANF and CalWORKS clocks and other relevant tracking data. These enhancements will simplify the process for determining CalWORKS and TANF eligibility.

Q. How will information about the project be communicated to counties?

A. The WDTIP is committed to provide timely and accurate information to all project stakeholders. To ensure that this information flow occurs, a Communication Team has been formed and has developed a detailed plan to promote open communication with the counties. Ongoing communications will include monthly Help Desk Bulletins, Quarterly Information Letters, regional information meetings in September 1999, and on-site county visits as necessary.

Q. Will I need a separate terminal to access the WDTIP system?

A. The WDTIP system will be accessed through MEDS. You will be able to access the information through any terminal that you are currently using to access the MEDS network.

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under CONSTRUCTION

The WDTIP Team is in the midst of the design phase of the WDTIP system.

To better understand the design phase and how it relates to the overall system development, it may be helpful to compare the process to, let's say, building a new house. If you were to have a house built for you, what would you do first? Well, you'd probably sit down with an architect to figure out what it should look like to meet your family's needs (for example, the number of bedrooms and bathrooms).

The architect will take your requirements and begin developing the blueprint. Since you'll be living in this house for a long time, you'll want to meet with the architect several times to make sure she's designing the house to your specifications.



So, what's the second thing you'd do? Well, now that you have a blueprint, it's time to hire a contractor to build the house. I'm sure you'll want the contractor to work carefully with the architect to ensure that the physical house matches the blueprint that you and the architect created. Make sure you don't let that contractor talk you into an extra bathroom or bedroom! It'll increase your cost and the amount of time required to finish the construction, and, in turn, it will delay your move.

Like building a house, the "blueprint" of the new WDTIP system must be developed before we begin construction. This step occurs during the Joint Requirements Planning (JRP) sessions and Joint Application Design (JAD)

sessions. In these sessions, eligibility experts from the State and various counties, along with technical experts, determine exactly what the system must do to meet the users' needs. The needs become the business requirements of the system, and the technical solution becomes the detailed design specifications or "blueprint" of the WDTIP system.

With the system "blueprint" created, programmers can begin building. Just as the contractor will constantly validate his work with the architect and the blueprint of the house, the system programmers will validate their work against the detailed design specifications to ensure that the system provides the agreed upon functionality. You can bet that we won't let the programmers sell us a little more functionality than dictated by our design specifications, because that will increase the cost and the amount of time needed to implement the new system.

We like to think of the forthcoming WDTIP system as a brand new beautiful house that will provide its owners with amenities to make life a little easier. No longer will eligibility staff need to call numerous counties to determine when an applicant/recipient received aid, and whether she/he was exempt from the time clock ticking. The new system will provide this information for the worker, calculate the months on aid (including exceptions and exemptions!), and display the TANF and CalWORKs clocks (all three!) in an easily accessible and readable manner. Now that's even better than a brand new home!

status check

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

The Implementation Team is responsible for a number of activities to assist county staff throughout California's 58 counties with transitioning to the new system. Over the next year, we will continually communicate with counties and other stakeholders, assist counties with data conversion, train county trainers and provide Help Desk assistance.

In June, the Implementation Team developed a Stakeholder Communication Plan, which outlines communication activities that will occur over the course of the project. Developing an approach to communicating efficiently and appropriately with so many entities, with such diverse audiences and interests, opened our eyes to what the notion of "statewideness" is going to mean for us. We think we've got the right approach but feedback from stakeholders will cement it! Either we're on the right track or we still have a lot to learn about getting information to those who need it, when they need it, and in the fashion that works for them. The Stakeholder Communication Plan will be posted on our website, www.wdtip.cahwnet.gov. Take a look. We welcome your comments.

Since we've established the guidelines for keeping everyone informed, we've moved our focus on to training. We have a terrific training staff that knows what it takes to be line staff. Our trainers are experienced and some have clerical, eligibility, supervision and analyst backgrounds. We're working hard to be right on the money and not waste your time. We can't promise we won't show up on "ten-day NOA" or MEDS Cutoff but if we do, you'll be with people who'll understand your needs!

WDTIP TIP...

Here's some WDTIP Jargon you'll hear a lot about.....

CONVERSION is the process by which the WDTIP database is populated with each of the 58 counties' data on time clocks and other tracking information.

INITIAL FILE LOAD occurs at the time of conversion, when we take your county's data (that exists in a file) and upload it into the WDTIP database.

ONGOING FILE LOAD refers to how WDTIP information will be regularly updated. Each county will send the WDTIP a file on a regular basis to update time clocks, program information and other tracking data.

INITIAL VERSUS ONGOING FILE LOAD is like the difference between intake and ongoing in the eligibility technician's world. One is an initial process to obtain information or intake, the other is making changes to the original information or ongoing.

TIME CLOCK CALCULATION is a term you're going to hear a lot. The WDTIP system is designed to track a recipient's program involvement across counties, over time and to compute the affected clocks accordingly. The only way we can compute the number of TANF or CalWORKs months used by the client is to take program involvement, factor in diversion, minus exceptions, exemptions and sanctions and do the math!

SIS stands for SAWS Information System. It's a database that stores WDTIP welfare-related information, specifically, an individual's welfare and welfare-related program involvement.

SAWS-TA is the project that developed the SIS database. The WDTIP builds upon these efforts. Yes, the project did change its name, but there was a good reason. The SAWS-TA project focused on building the technology to ensure all four welfare consortium systems would be able to communicate with each other. But, because it's taking a little bit longer to implement all four systems, and because welfare reform has created an immediate need to track data, the WDTIP was instigated to provide an immediate solution to meet the needs of Eligibility Workers.

upcoming **ACTIVITIES**

JULY

26th

Check out our new website at www.wdtip.cahwnet.gov! It will be updated officially on the fourth Monday of every month. The website also contains a more detailed calendar.

30th

Look for the first Help Desk Bulletin. These bulletins will be sent out at the end of every month.

AUGUST

3rd-5th

Joint Application Design Sessions will be held in Sacramento. Please call Sue Wolf for more information at (916) 229-4496.

23rd

The website will be updated. If you want to provide feedback about the contents or layout, please call our Communication Lead, Lorrie Taylor, at (916) 229-3380.

27th

The second Help Desk Bulletin will be sent out. The toll free Help Desk number is (877) 365-7378.

SEPTEMBER

All Month

The Implementation Team will be conducting regional information meetings and traveling to areas throughout the State (locations and dates to be determined) to talk with counties about implementation activities as well as conversion of data for the new system.

24th

Help Desk Bulletin will be sent out.

27th

The website will, once again, be updated.

30th

Phase I ends. Prepare for the next quarterly information letter.



editor's **NOTE**

What would you like to see in the WDTIP Update? Have any interest in writing an article? We would love to hear from you. Please feel free to contact Lorrie Taylor (916) 229-3380 if you would like to contribute any information or have any feedback.