EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE IN THE CALWORKS PROGRAM OF SACRAMENTO COUNTY

Christin Mealor
B.A., California State University, Sacramento, 2004

Kristin Plyler
B.A., California State University, San Jose, 2008

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EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE IN THE CALWORKS PROGRAM OF SACRAMENTO COUNTY

A Project

by

Christin Mealor

Kristin Plyler

Approved by:

__________________________________, Committee Chair
Andrew Bein, PhD, LCSW

Date: ______________________________
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Teiahsha Bankhead, PhD, LCSW

Division of Social Work
Abstract

of

EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE IN THE CALWORKS PROGRAM OF SACRAMENTO COUNTY

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Exploratory research was done to find themes among worker and client perceptions about the CalWORKs program of Sacramento County. Researchers sought to understand from these two viewpoints if current policies and regulations of the program are effective in assisting clients in gaining necessary skills to obtain employment and become financially independent. Data for the research were collected from 20 qualitative interviews. Christin Mealor conducted ten interviews with clients from the Department of Human Assistance in Sacramento County. Kristin Plyler conducted ten interviews with Human Services Specialists at the Department of Human Assistance in Sacramento. The writers collaborated equally through the project’s completion. Analysis of the data revealed surprising discrepancies that exist between providers and clients served through the CalWORKs program. For example, it was found that nine out of ten workers did not feel that the relationship between client and worker had any bearing in a client’s success or independence from the program. On the other hand, most clients had identified the
relationship with the service provider as an important factor in their ability to utilize services and obtain employment. Additionally, researchers discovered that many service providers felt a client’s motivation was fixed and could not be influenced—that a client would either have the motivation to get off of welfare or not. This was not the perspective of clients, many of whom explained that they did not want to be on welfare and had motivation to obtain employment despite the many barriers that existed. Although clients stated that the current economic recession was having a negative impact on job searching, workers maintained that “generational welfare” would be the largest influence in a client’s ability to gain employment. Suggestions for CalWORKs program improvement were advanced.

______________________________, Committee Chair
Andrew Bein, PhD, LCSW

Date: ____________________________
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Chapter 1
THE ISSUE
Introduction

One form or another of Social Welfare has been around since antiquity. In the United States, there are many social welfare programs funded by the government which aim to support families and help them to get out of poverty. However, often times, families are put on cash assistance and never find a way out of the cycle. Domestic violence, teen pregnancy, mental health issues, limited access to education, insufficient job experience, child care, transportation, and legal problems are risk factors for continued dependence on a system which seems to fail people over and over again.

This study will take an exploratory qualitative approach to understanding how staff and clients perceive the CalWORKs program. Based on research and personal experience of the researchers, we are approaching this study with some idea of potential problems, such as lack of needed welfare to work services, worker inconsistencies, and lack of support and education. However, we are hoping to learn from the workers and clients what their view of the situation is and highlight common themes.

Welfare programs in the United States have implemented policies which put time limits and sanctions at the forefront of decision making in efforts to reduce the caseloads and promote individualism in our capitalist society. These efforts advance the ethic of independence and a move away from community. In addition to this, incentive and reward is given to recipients who engage in traditional marriage—which often times has
reinforced gender stereotypes and patriarchy. Also, welfare reform enabled some people to get off of assistance, but many are left to low paying jobs which keeps them in poverty. It was found that people often return to welfare after being off of it for some amount of time. Welfare regulations impose a 60-month lifetime limit and leave many single parents without any formal job training or education allowing for promotion or success in the job sector.

More specifically, our study looks at the CalWORKs program in Sacramento County. CalWORKs is the welfare program that California enacted after welfare reform in 1996. Since its implementation, numbers of those receiving aid and returning to aid after completion of the program continue to stagger. In 2006 the caseload for CalWORKs in California was about 500,000 families, which equates to about 1.2 million people. The demographics of the caseload in 2006 are, 46 percent of the CalWORKs caseload is Latino, 20 percent is African-American, 9 percent is Asian/Pacific Islander, 49 percent of the children on CalWORKs are Latino, and 42 percent of two parent homes are Asian/Pacific Islander. Of the statewide population, 3.5 is receiving CalWORKs.

The five counties with the highest population of people receiving CalWORKs are Tulare, Fresno, Imperial, Merced, Del Norte, and the most number of people on aid is Los Angeles County with 430,000 people. In 1996, 16.9 percent of AFDC recipients secured employment; however, under the CalWORKS program this rose to 33.4 percent and income levels were reported as $100 higher (Western, 2005).
Background of the Problem

CalWORKs was implemented in 1998 after the welfare reform act that ended AFDC. CalWORKs was the name given to the TANF program in California. The goal of CalWORKs was to help end poverty and dependency on government programs (Besharov, 2003). However, this has not been the case; the CalWORKs program has not proven to be an effective program. The CalWORKs budget in 2007 was 2.3 billion dollars, a mixture of state and federal dollars (Herald, 2008).

Much of our concern about the ineffectiveness of the CalWORKs program should be the fact that in 2008 1,591,295 (17%) of the state of California’s children lived in poverty. The majority of below poverty level households in the United States are headed by women. Each day 3,742 babies are born to unmarried mothers, 2,385 of them born into poverty. The number of children living in poverty has increased by 12.85% between 2000 and 2005 alone, which means that 1.5 million more children were living in poverty in 2004 then 2000 (Children’s Defense Fund, 2008).

The long-term impact upon children born and raised in poverty should be on our minds. These children are more likely to continue the same cycle. They will be unemployed more frequently than average, have their own children while young, and raise them in poverty as well. In addition to affecting children themselves and the adults they become, child poverty takes a heavy toll on the United States as a whole. The most recent estimates indicate that the social and economic cost of child poverty totals half a
trillion dollars a year, or the equivalent of nearly 4% of GDP in loss of productivity, higher crime, and poorer health (Children’s Defense Fund, 2008).

Statement of the Research Problem

The research problem is that The Welfare Reform Act of 1996 was meant to end dependency and lower poverty. However, the CalWORKs program has fallen short at accomplishing the stated above goals. The program emphasizes work, or minimal training programs versus education. The goal of the program is to get the client off cash assistance, but this does not, most times, get the client out of poverty. Many clients cycle on and off of welfare, but rarely leave welfare permanently. CalWORKs looks little different than AFDC, except there are stricter requirements and more punitive measures if the requirements are not met.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research problem is to compare the opinions of the workers who serve the CalWORKs client population, and the clients of the CalWORKs program themselves. The study will help to create an increased understanding in what needs to be changed in the program for it to be more effective in creating independence from welfare programs, and in lowering poverty rates.

We will be interviewing twenty participants. Ten workers will be interviewed who serve the CalWORKs program in Sacramento County, as well as ten clients who are currently receiving CalWORKs cash assistance and welfare to work programs. The participants will be chosen based on their willingness to participate in the study.
Statement of Collaboration

For our exploratory study, “Experiences of People in the CalWORKS Program of Sacramento County,” Kristin will be interviewing ten workers and Christin will be interviewing ten clients in the CalWORKS program. These interviews are approximately 45 minutes each and will be evaluated together. The ways in which we have collaborated include: finding research articles, meeting and planning. Christin and Kristin will each be doing half of the writing and reporting of findings. We are collaborating on structure and formulation of topics by meeting and discussing the material.

Theoretical Framework

Social Construction

When looking at any social issue through the social constructionist’s lens, one discovers many useful tools in analyzing society. Social construction is a postmodern theory which does not embrace universal stages of development, but rather sees human development as occurring within a particular cultural context (Greene, 2008). Social construction theory provides the tools necessary for teaching our clients about how their environments, socially created, may contribute to oppression. For example, from this perspective, it can be viewed that a social institution, such as welfare assistance has created barriers and socially constructed limitations. Such limitations could include how the person receiving assistance may have internalized being negatively viewed by society as lazy or incompetent, which in turn would affect the person’s likelihood to advance or gain successful employment.
The Social construction theory challenges modernist perspectives that adhere to fixed ideas and truths which categorize and label. Using this theory to understand the “research problem” of dependence on aid becomes critical in understanding how the institution itself, Welfare, contributes to the very thing it reportedly seeks to eliminate, dependence. The social constructionist sees the problem as deeper and perhaps not occurring within the individuals themselves, but the society which perpetuates and enforces the capitalist, ethnocentric, political and culturally biased move away from community and towards hierarchy.

Within this theory, we also learn that the primary focuses of application are the interactions a person has with his or her environment. Social constructionism explores individuals’ construction of reality. The principle is vital when introducing the clients and workers addressed in this document. Many of the clients in the CalWORKS program grew up with parents who were dependents of aid, therefore; they may have received cultural messages early on that they were somehow less than others or that being on aid is what is available. Some children may have been taught to culturally believe that they too would become dependent on aid. Independence itself can be viewed a social construct. The Social constructionist may take into consideration that we are all interdependent upon one another, and no one is truly independent of the system around them. It is imperative to realize that whoever holds the power defines meaning in a particular culture. A person who is operating from the social constructionist’s lens will denote the power of such figures to define for those who hold less power (limited access to
resources such as, wealth, education, transportation) what meaning to associate to various life situations. Meaning becomes a derivative of an individual’s perception, but frequently this occurs within existing confines of society (Greene, 2008).

Empowerment/ Feminist Perspective

Empowerment occurs when individuals, families, groups and communities increase power through consciousness raising and are taking action to improve a situation. Group consciousness can occur when people of a similar experience and concern develop awareness of the relation between personal problems and social structure—just as feminists identify the personal is political, empowerment is a process whereby individuals and society begin to recognize how group membership can affect personal circumstances and is imperative to identifying powerlessness. These theories promote that when a person, group or community has a psychological sense that they can improve certain circumstances, they are more likely to take action (Green 2008). In a society where middle-class, heterosexual, ethnocentric norms dominate, it can render other communities vulnerable.

Feminist therapists have said that an experience being accepted or experienced by another person who collaborates and elaborates on what is said is the process of empowerment. The empowerment is key in stimulating the reconstruction of client’s life stories. For families involved in the CalWORKs program, critical consciousness could be raised in order for people living in oppression by a social institution to see how ethnocentric individualism is trying to take away their identity and community. Paulo
Freire conceptualized in 1982, “Concientizacion” which is defined as the development of critical awareness—the critical awareness of how everything occurs within social and political contexts.

Definition of Terms

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is the federal program through which other states are funded including CalWORKs. The social welfare program primarily being discussed in this paper is CalWORKs Welfare to Work program. This is a program with time limits and sanctions. The goal of this program is to assist people in gaining employment while offering temporary aid. Community Work Experience (CWEX) is another program under Welfare to Work which compensates people in the program, considering their aid as payment for volunteering in the community.

Assumptions

These researchers operate under the assumption that improvements can be made to the existing CalWORKs program. The assumption is that the workers and clients will offer their honest opinions and thoughts about the program in order to facilitate a research project which will offer suggestions and information.

Justification

The concept of welfare has been a priority issue among social workers in the United States of America since the beginning of this country. Welfare has morphed into various programs throughout the years. Little research has been done to look specifically at the perceptions of effectiveness of these programs in Sacramento County. This
research goes to the source for perspective on what is viewed as effective or not.
Research is being done from the view of the client as well as the worker to get a clear picture and find themes.

Many of the programs which are currently being implemented in Sacramento County are viewed as ineffective by workers and clients. Job Club, a program through Welfare to Work, often prepares clients for jobs which are not available. In addition, it seems that clients are encouraged to gain skills in low-level jobs, such as factory work versus getting education. This study is asking workers and clients to offer suggestions for improvements. People who are receiving the services and offering the services have a clear view of what does not seem to work and what does. By raising awareness to these issues, it creates knowledge about the issue for professionals going into the field and for policy maker.

Limitations

This study is only looking at the perceived effectiveness of the program implemented in Sacramento County, and there are programs across the nation. This study is limited by the number of participants. Since only ten workers and ten clients are being interviewed out of 94,460 children and parents in CalWORKs, it is considered a small convenience sample (California Budget Project, 2009).
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The following topics have been chosen in order to create a better understanding of social welfare. The topics are also selected to relate to the research conducted. This chapter begins with a historical overview. Information specific to the CalWORKs program of Sacramento County is included also. Literature is used to explain barriers to services and the cycle of dependence among families on assistance. Additionally, there is literature regarding worker burnout and role conflict.

Historical Background

In the United States of America, social welfare is an institution which provides help to members of society. Social policy, which determines the kind of programs developed, is often a reflection of “underlying humanistic, egalitarian, democratic philosophy” (Stoesz, 1989, p. 101). Religious values influence social policy and often incorporate the importance of charity, love of mankind and mutual aid in the community. However, throughout history there has also been an emphasis on deciding who the worthy and unworthy poor are. As beliefs and attitudes shift over time, those who are living in poverty or oppression become vulnerable to society’s labels and self-proclaimed morals.

The welfare system in the United States of America appears as a result of a particular historical context. Our system and policies have been created by those who
hold power. Government and voters define what it means to be poor and how the persisting issue of poverty in the United States should be addressed. United States history plays the part which most notably stems from white Anglo-Saxon Protestants immigration from England in the 17th Century (Platt & Cooreman, 2001). Many shifts occurred in welfare during history. Later, in the 1800’s there was the Poorhouse era. This was followed by the Great Depression and New Deal responses to it (Trattner, 1999).

Preceding the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601, citizens of England had provided parameters of the deserving versus undeserving poor, relying on age and ability. The Henrician Poor Law gave government some responsibility beyond the parish in providing services for the poor. However, under the same law, beggars of the time who were considered to be of able body were severely punished—they were tied to the end of carts in the market place and whipped (Trattner, 1999).

The Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601 was a further revision set out by parliament in an attempt, from their viewpoint, to punish or correct the “unworthy poor” and help and provide charity to the helpless or “worthy” poor. Taxes were collected by the parish in order to secure funding for what was considered a local responsibility. The English were willing to pay such taxes on the basis that people considered to be deserving of such relief were truly unable to help themselves and were of good moral character (McIntosh, 2005). Under the Elizabethan Poor Law, the English were not expected to provide relief for people from other communities or “outsiders.” The English determined that orphans, elderly, physically and mentally disabled were deserving and worthy of relief. On the
other hand, a person who was considered undeserving and unworthy was anyone who appeared able but chose not to work (McIntosh, 2005). The Elizabethan Poor Law provided a heavy influence for poor laws adapted by Colonial America and thereafter in the United States of America.

Poorhouse Era

Upon arriving in America, colonials were faced with decisions about how to surmount the overwhelming poverty in the new world. The protestant work ethic had been influential in the development of a system in early America which hoped to deter anyone from seeking relief. Seasonal work, farm labor and irregularity of available work left many in the United States in poverty. Many were able to obtain outdoor relief while others were admitted to Almshouses. Although there were workers who genuinely could not obtain employment due to the economic situation, there was a movement to abolish relief during this era by those who felt that the reason one could not gain employment was because of the person’s laziness and worthlessness. (Katz, 1996).

During the Poorhouse Era, there were many factors that contributed to a family’s propensity towards poverty. Work was risky and hazardous (such as working on a railroad or mining), often leading to illness among workers and their families. Sickness or injury would potentially disable a man who was then unable to work and admitted to an Almshouse. Sicknesses spread within these poorhouses and remained a common factor among those who were on assistance. During this period, there was a massive immigration of 5 million people to the United States from 1820 to 1860 (Katz, 1996).
This mass immigration of people, such as Irish immigrants fleeing the potato famine, not only magnified the issues of poverty, but also intensified negative and racist stereotypes between groups of people who were struggling to obtain limited resources and jobs.

Pauperism was defined as any unavoidable circumstance that caused poverty and deserved help. However, in 1934 Charles Burroughs wrote on the evils of pauperism as coming from a lack in moral character. He felt that *this kind* of pauperism should not be rewarded. These differing perspectives were later were coined as worthy vs. unworthy poor and would be the premise for justification of horrid conditions in relief. The poorhouse had become a place to house what was considered the waste of humanity. Those with mental illnesses were imprisoned along with criminals in dark, grim housing. People were abused whose only crime was poverty. Poorhouses remained an intolerable place for people and workers alike (Katz, 1996).

However, in the 1890s, there was a new development. Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr founded the Hull House—the first social settlement in the United States. Hull House residents were involved in social activism and reform attempts of a system that had evidently been failing. Women’s social institutions had given way to women’s social power. Women reform efforts towards group consciousness raising, community organizing and collaboration had led to changes such as the 1893 anti-sweatshop legislation which would mandate no more than 8 hour work days for women and children. The Hull House, funded primarily by wealthy women, was somewhat
autonomous from male-dominated political and religious constraints of the time (Sklar, 1985).

Great Depression and the Social Security Act

In 1929, the stock market crashed in the United States and unemployment increased drastically. At this time, the role of women and families had undergone significant changes. Birth and marriage rates were declining. In addition, married women (white) who were formerly confined to roles in the home were now being employed at high rates. Although there was a demand for female employment in white-collar jobs during World War II, black women were segregated into other jobs due to ongoing racism and prejudice. The employment of women in the workforce enabled them to be scapegoats and blamed for the high unemployment rates of men (Abramovitz, 1988).

The Social Security Act of 1935 was enacted during this time in efforts to help those who were struggling. As part of this act, The Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program was instituted (Besharov, 2003). Since the beginning of the AFDC in 1935, it has gained criticism from those arguing that it destroys family morals and a work ethic. Few people have listened to activists who say that this act expands welfare rights. Poor women are faced with the ever changing opinions of the public and waves of change in policy reflecting those opinions. The AFDC was considered to be stigmatized unlike Social Security or Worker’s Compensation. The AFDC was allocated for society’s “undeserving poor.” The undeserving at this time were deemed women who were unmarried and gave birth to children whom they could not support because of either
not having a husband or not having a husband who made enough income. In addition to the discrimination associated with recipients of AFDC, during the 1930’s, some black women were refused aid in order to keep them as domestic or field help (Withorn, 1996).

There are scholars today who argue that Social Security of 1935 and the New Deal promoted racial stratification and excluded people who were most needy at the time, namely African Americans and other minorities. It has been questioned whether the New Deal favored white Americans and further implicated others. For example, the Social Security Act of 1935 did not permit blacks to reject exceptionally low wages as laborers and servants or receive coverage as part of the Agricultural Adjustment Act. These elements were protested by Walter White of the NAACP as color discrimination under the New Deal (Davies & Derthick, 1997).

The Social Security Act of 1935 developed from the government’s reaction to the failing economy and disturbance of family structure. This act was intended to provide stabilization and support for people in distress during the Depression. The act favored traditional family roles and work. The programs of the act seemed to perpetuate gender bias and ultimately typify what women’s roles should be in the home and in the work force. Little of this act has been changed conceptually since its initial enactment (Abramovitz, 1996). Later on, in the 1940s and 1950s, aid was denied to single mothers and women of color due to policies which deemed these women to be “unfit.” At the time, the government wanted to deter women from the program by making it undesirable.
The government did not seem to put any effort into improving the program so that women could become independent from aid (Withorn, 1996).

**Welfare Reform**

Mandatory work programs came about in the 1960’s, and they developed from the opinion that poor women would not work unless they were mandated to do so. This mandate proved contradicted the reality that the highest rates of employment among women were poor women. In the 1980’s, AFDC recipients (working poor) received the first cuts. The Family Support Act (FSA) of 1988 provided penalties for women who did not obtain employment or enter school or work programs (Withorn, 1996).

In 1994, welfare rates hit an astonishing high of 5.1 million families on aid or 15% of American families with children. Beginning the same year, caseloads started on a radical 7-year reduction of 60%. These reductions leveled out around 2001, and there was a slight increase in caseloads possibly due to the weakening economy. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) was said to be behind the massive decline during the 1990’s. Bill Clinton coined the phrase “make work pay” and his goal was to, “ensure that no one with a family who works full time has to raise their children in poverty” (Besharov, 2003, p. 17).

The notion of whether Welfare Reform has been a success or failure remains a debate among liberals and right-wing Republicans alike. Some feel that welfare encourages dependency and increased budget deficits while others may see welfare as a necessary support to families in need. Whatever the perspective, it remains that
challenges lie ahead and need to be addressed using research, and sound reasoning (Besharov, 2003).

**CalWORKs**

In January 1998, California implemented its welfare reform program, called the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program. CalWORKS serves all counties in the State of California. The program is supervised by the State and administered by county agencies.

In January 1999, assistance units that consisted of two parents were required to participate in at least 35 hours each week in welfare-to-work activities. Both parents may contribute to the 35-hour work requirement; however one parent must participate at least 20 hours a week in a core activity such as employment or community service. The core activity has to have a “work” component to it. Vocational training, adult education, literacy classes etc are considered non-core activities and can only count for a maximum of 12 hours towards the 35-hour a week rule (CDSS, 2003).

Upon application of CalWORKs, the worker determines if the participant can be exempt from welfare to work activities. If an exemption is not made and the participant is not already engaged in an approvable activity, such as unsubsidized employment, subsidized employment, work experience, community service, adult basic education, vocational training, mental health counseling, substance abuse counseling, the participant will be assigned to a four week, supervised job search as their first activity. If the
participant does not find employment through the job search, she/he will be referred for an assessment (CDSS, 2003).

A person who is non-exempt, refuses to sign the welfare to work plans, refuses to cooperate in meeting the welfare to work program requirements, or fails to fulfill their welfare to work plan with out good cause will receive a financial sanction. For the first non-compliance sanction the participant will be sanctioned until an activity has been participated in for one month. The second non-compliance sanction will result in a period of three months, and the third and thereafter sanctions involve a minimum of six months. In 1999 6.1% of the states CalWORKs caseload was sanctioned for welfare to work. Results from the State of California’s RAND report indicated that two-thirds of non-complying participants stated transportation and child care issues as reasons for non-compliance.

Additionally, cash aid grants are not be increased for additional children born to families who have been on assistance for ten months prior to the child’s birth, unless an exemption has been made. Fulfilling requirement for exemptions are rape, incest or pregnancy occurring due to the failure of tubal-ligation, depo-provera, or IUD. (CDSS, 2003).

From 1998 to 2002 the State of California substantially increased its participant’s receipt of mental health and substance abuse treatment services in order to help remove barriers to employment. In fiscal year 2001-2002 106 million dollars was spent. This was 99 percent of the allocated funds being used. On average 9,445 people received these
services in 2001-2002. Services provided using the CalWORKs mental health and 
substance abuse funding include evaluation/assessment and case management, treatment, 
including rehabilitation services and counseling, treatment for family members, outreach 
and marketing of services, and increasing the maximum amount of people served. The 
substance abuse and mental health funds are considered a lump allocation; however the 
individual counties have the flexibility in transferring funds from one program to another 
in order to meet the needs of their county’s population (CDSS, 2003).

In 2001-2002 counties used $59,962,362 for mental health treatment services, and 
$46,648,682 for substance abuse services. Sacramento County was allocated $3,084,008 
but spent $3,710,256; 120% of allocated for mental health services. On substance abuse 
services Sacramento County was allocated $3,225,302 and spent 3,191,004; 99% of 
allocated funds (CDSS, 2003).

Job Club Program

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) contracted with RAND to 
evaluate the CalWORKs program. In the report job, the club was evaluated, and the 
importance of moving CalWORKs participants quickly in to job club programs was 
found. The report also found that the program works. A large proportion of participants in 
the job club program get a job. Job club participation has been found to lead to more 
Cal-Learn Program—Welfare for California Youth

The Cal-Learn program of Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance is operated by Sutter Medical Center. This program is for parents under the age of 19 who are on welfare and have not received a high school diploma or equivalent. This mandatory program seeks to foster independence and success of parenting or pregnant teenage mothers by encouraging completion of high school education (SCDHA, 2005).

The research highlights that there needs to be a reassigning of the identity for pregnant and parenting teens. It is noted that before the term “teen mother” came about in the 1970s, the phrase “unwed mothers” was used to describe the young mothers. There have been negative media portrayals of the teenage mother. There is the dominant image, according to one author, that a pregnant teen is a black, urban, and poor female who most likely had a teenage mother herself (Hallman, 2007). Negative portrayal, stigmatization, prejudice and stereotypes of teenage mothers have given dominant society a belief and judgment upon which justification of limited success prevails. It is recognized that young women living in poor conditions are more impacted by teen pregnancy than young women who are not poor. In addition, there is evidence that when supportive educational opportunities are available for teenage mothers the rates of high school graduation increase.

Therefore, Hallman (2007) states that this negative image needs to be changed in order for teenage mothers to thrive in a school environment. Hallman says teenage mothers are often placed in remedial programs which view the women as unsuccessful.
Hallman’s reshaping of the teenage mother’s identity includes: “positioning students as both mothers and students; viewing the school as both a place of learning and a place of community; and positioning the students’ young children as both the hope for the future and the hope for their mother’s future” (Hallman, 2007). Mentorship has been found to be essential in the acceleration and education of young teen mothers (Amin, 2006).

Similarly, there is a body of research that indicates connections between early motherhood and negative outcomes for the mother and child in terms of economics, education and mental health. It is estimated that 1,000,000 teenagers become pregnant each year and 40 percent of the pregnancies are aborted (Corcoran, 2000). Furthermore, research has indicated that teenage mothers are at a greater risk for health and mental health problems, such as depression (Han, 2007). Psychosocial supportive services are needed to assist teenage mothers who are under stress. Race/ethnicity and socio-economic status become barriers to service, especially in poor neighborhoods (Han, 2007). One study found that parent support programs with school based child care settings help teenage mothers to stay engaged with school as their children are being cared for in a safe environment which is close to school (Sadler, 2007).

Bronfenbrenner’s framework of the ecological systems model can be used to organize aspects of teenage pregnancy at different levels. As discussed earlier, two variables found to be contributing factors to teenage pregnancy, race and socioeconomic status (SES), are a part of the macrosystem. According to research, SES is a major contributing factor to early pregnancy (Corcoran, 2000). Understanding that ethnic
minority groups are over represented at the lower SES level, it becomes clear why the birth rates are higher for ethnic minorities. It has been found that 101.8 per 1,000 births are to Hispanic females, 91.4 per 1,000 are to African American females and the rate for white teen mothers is much less at 48.1 per 1,000 (Corcoran, 2000). In the mesosystem there are family structural influences. For instance, it seems that being a child of a single-parent household is a significant risk factor for teenage pregnancy. At the microsystem level there are psychological components including self-esteem and depression. In 1988, a study found that teenagers, white and Hispanic, who had previous episodes of depression were more likely to consider early pregnancy than those who had not (Corcoran, 2000).

Much research has been done to explore the effectiveness of programs designed to encourage and enhance education of parenting teens. Further evaluation is needed to assess for strengths and weaknesses of such programs. Lifeline Family Center in Florida has found that women who become pregnant as teenagers are much less likely to finish high school education, and therefore at a great disadvantage when seeking employment and caring for their children (Rowen, 2005).

Education and Youth

Although there are many programs aimed at reducing pregnancy among teenagers in the United States (including the Cal-Learn program), it remains a significant issue affecting nearly 1 million teenage girls per year, half of whom take their pregnancy to full term. It has been determined that young parents and their kids flourish in school
environments that design and implement comprehensive programs specific to the needs of young parents. The Education Amendments of 1972 was enacted to ensure that teen mothers were no longer expelled from schools. One may expect that the United States would have come a long way in meeting the needs of parenting teens since the early 1970’s; however, this is not the case. Many schools will simply ignore the problem (Scholl, 2007).

Parenting teens are faced with the growing need for support in the areas of child care, transportation, and financial need. Struggles in these areas inhibit them from attending school. Risk factors of teen pregnancy include not gaining education or self-sufficiency. The number one reason for high school drop-out among teenage girls is pregnancy. In addition, teen parents are at an extremely high risk for entering and living a cycle of dependency on welfare, such as many mothers in the Cal-Works program who seem to be born into and perpetuate the cycle of dependency on aid. It becomes imperative for school to recognize and seek to meet the special educational requirements for young teen mothers. It has been established through research that comprehensive programs are highly effective in getting pregnant and parenting teens to graduate from high school (Scholl, 2007).

There was a school program for young mothers and their children in Plainfield, New Jersey which was effective in increasing graduation rates among mothers to 84%, compared with only 41% of young mothers who were not in any program. Similar rates of high school completion were achieved in programs that foster and encourage success
through meeting the unique needs of students who also have the role of parents. Some common characteristics of these educational programs included: support, guidance, mentorship, lower student to teacher class ratios, single-sex classrooms and easily accessible contraceptives, health care and child care (Scholl, 2007).

Community volunteer mentoring programs are another successful intervention for young teenage mothers. One study conducted identified several key factors which promoted success of teen mentorship programs based on an effective mentoring program already instituted in an urban community health center (Waller, 1999). This research suggested that it would be beneficial to offer a volunteer mentoring program which recruits, trains and supports volunteers.

A helpful factor in mentorship programs has been identified as social support among pregnant and parenting teens. Teens are encouraged to maintain their health during and after pregnancy, and this practice yields healthy births. Young mothers are also encouraged to continue with education and supported in achievement of high school education and beyond. Emotional support is another factor that reduces stress among young mothers and in turn helps them achieve their goals. Mentors are selected and recruited in the community and chosen on the basis of their ability to be an enduring fixture in the young mother’s life. Cultural sensitivity, interpersonal skills, reliability are among other criteria. Mentors should be offered ongoing training and possess empathy for the young mothers. Community volunteer mentoring programs are creative and cost-effective. These community based programs lead to many positive outcomes including
psychological and biological health, and improved social and economic situations (Waller, 1999).

Welfare and Barriers to Employment

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (1996) (PRWORA) had the goal of promoting economic self-sufficiency, by requiring recipients to work in order to continue eligibility for cash benefits. The PRWORA required by the year 2002 that states have 50% of caseloads engaged in a work activity such as paid employment, job training, or community service thirty hours a week. (Brown, Victoria, & Riley, Micah, 2005).

With the passage of the PRWORA in 1996, there was a great decline in the TANF caseload; it went from 4.41 million families in 1996 to 2.20 million families in 2001, due in part to families’ being no longer eligible to assistance because of earnings from income. (Scott, Ellen, London, Scott & Gross, Glenda, 2007). Since 2001 the decline has been slower, and the families on assistance are ones who face a barrier or multiple barriers to employment. Some of these barriers include child care, domestic violence, substance abuse and lack of transportation, low levels of education, no job experience, mental health, personal disability or the disability of a child. (Corbett, Janine, Bond, Crystal, & Hastedt, Chris, 2008). TANF caseloads have begun to be filled with the most difficult to aid, and states have been challenged in their efforts to help. There is great diversity among people who have barriers to self-sufficiency and each person’s barrier needs an individual response; some people need job training, others need help due to
personal or environmental conditions, and others need close case management to help in healthy parenting and child development of the children (Greer & Ellen, 2007).

**Domestic Violence**

The rate of domestic violence is higher in the population of families receiving cash assistance than the general populations. Of women receiving welfare, 50-60% have experienced domestic violence at some point in their life. The rate of domestic violence for non-recipients of welfare is 20-30%. Victims of domestic violence are at increased risk for physical and mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, depression and generalized anxiety disorder. Essentially, being a victim of domestic violence creates multiple barriers to employment. Years of abuse leave a person and their children emotionally and physically scarred.

Women in a study stated the harsh requirements and difficulties of TANF, made them wonder if staying with their abusers made them better off than trying to navigate the welfare system (Corbett et al., 2008). A study in California found one in eight of their participants had experienced physical or sexual abuse by a partner in the prior year (CFPIC, 2008).

Going along with domestic violence, partner control is a barrier to employment. One in twelve study participants reported in the prior year. Her partner discouraged her, harassed her, or made it difficult to work, go to school or attend job training. These difficulties caused her to lose her job or drop out of school (CFPIC, 2008).
Disability

A second barrier to employment is personal physical disability or the disability of a child. Thirty-two to forty-two percent of TANF recipients report having impairments or chronic health problems. These statistics are three times higher than the rate of people who are disabled and are not receiving TANF for themselves or a person in their family. About one in five single parents receiving TANF had a child or children with a severe disability; about one-fourth of all children among TANF recipient families have a chronic illness (Nadel, Wamhoff & Wiseman, 2004).

Families that face barriers to employment because of their own or their child’s health problems are also more likely to be sanctioned for not being able to participate in welfare to work activity. People with a health condition were found to be sanctioned 30.1% of the time as opposed to 24.8% of people who had no reported health problems. Of disabled TANF recipients, 21.1% are less likely to be employed than recipients with no impairments. In 2002, 33 states had rules that allowed the exemption of people from participating in welfare to work activity, and 34 states allowed the exemption of the head of household if they are caring for an ill or incapacitated person. However, how each agency screens and assess for client’s disabilities vary, and thus there are inconsistencies in the system (Wamhoff & Wiseman, 2006).

Mental Health Issues

A third barrier to achieving employment is mental health challenges and substance abuse. Prolonged welfare dependence and poverty have been found to
aggravate existing substance and mental health problems. An Inspector General Study found substance abuse to be the most frequently cited functional impairment preventing recipients from gaining employment. The U.S Department of Health and Human Services reported findings of 10-20 percent of recipients addicted to drugs. A study done by the national household survey on drug abuse estimated that drug use was 50 percent more common in households that receive public assistance. (Atkinson, Brown, Montoya, Bell, 2004). And the National Institute of Drug abuse found between 6% and 37% of welfare recipients has some drug use disorder (NIDA, 2008). Adults convicted of drug-related felonies after August 22, 1996 are not eligible for cash assistance or food stamps (Jayakody, Rukmalie, Danzinger, Sheldon, Pollack, & Harold, 2000). Not only do drugs inhibit a person’s ability to work, they are left with few options financially if they do have a drug related felony on record.

Most welfare agencies do not have a systematic method for screening and assessing recipients for drug problems. Data from several states indicate that less then five percent of cases are referred for drug treatment services. However, it has been found that illicit drug use and dependence are more common among women receiving welfare than among women who do not. Long-term welfare recipients account for a large fraction of recent cocaine users and account for a large percentage of people who report other illicit drug use (Pollock, Danzinger, Seefeldt, & Jaykody, 2002).

A study done in California reported that one in ten had an alcohol or drug abuse or dependence barrier in the last 12 months (CEPIC, 2008). The mental health issues of
welfare recipients have been found to be a significant barrier to employment. Major depressive disorder has been found to affect 27.7% of the population receiving TANF in one California study, in the general population it is 6.6%. Additionally, 38.8% of the participants in the study were found to have one or more of the following diagnoses, major depression, generalized anxiety disorder panic attacks, social phobia and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The participants (16.9%) had impaired functioning due to these diagnoses at least five days of the past 30 days (Chandler, Daniel, Rienzi, Beth, Goodwin, Sandra, 2005).

Child Care

A fourth barrier to employment is lack of childcare. Part of the PRWORA allowed states greater flexibility in how they plan and administer child-care policies for low-income families. The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) funds federal child care subsidies. Eligibility for childcare can be established up to 85% of a state’s median income level. Childcare providers must be licensed or regulated under state laws and can range from formal childcare centers to friends and relatives (Rangarajan, Anu, Zippay, Allison, 2007).

However, studies by the Department of Health and Human Services have found that less than a third of TANF families use the subsidies. Some barriers to the use of subsidies comes from limited availability of formal child care in a center, conflicting cultural norms, lack of convenience and the inability to afford the services. Informal childcare arrangements are less reliable than formal child care centers. Additionally,
formal childcare arrangements are associated with better chances of employment. (Pearlmutter, Sue, Bartle, & Elizabeth, 2003). Many people on TANF have varying work schedules. Because of this child care needs are often unpredictable, making it hard to place children in formal childcare settings.

Another reason it has been found that TANF recipients do not always use the formal child care is that there are restrictive requirements that need to be met to be eligible, and that TANF recipients do not trust the adequacy of child care arrangements. Additionally, many of the TANF recipients are new to the employment world and are unaware of the child care that is available. Many expect a time consuming process, and are more comfortable using family and friends. Fear is among the reasons why TANF recipients have been found to want to use family and friends, especially if they have personal experience with either domestic violence or violence in their childhoods (Rangarajan et al., 2007).

Some parents have access to childcare assistance but find the system complicated, slow and undercompensated. So even with help paying for child care the system fails due to its own inefficiency. There is also stigma associated with using the child care assistance programs (Pearlmutter, 2003).

Education and Experience

A fifth barrier to employment is the client’s lack of education and job experience. A study done in 2004 with a sample of 284 recipients of TANF found that one third of the participants had neither a high school diploma nor a GED. Thirty percent of the
sample reported that in the past five years they had never worked more than six months at one job, and the longest worked at one job was eighteen months. The same study found that many of the participants had potential learning disabilities. One fourth of the participants reported having problems filling out forms, difficulty in spelling common words and mixed up arithmetic signs. (Taylor, Mary, Barusch, Amanda, 2004). Also, it was found in a Mississippi study of Lee and Coahoma counties that 15 – 16 percent of recipients did not have a high school diploma (Harris & Parisi, 2008).

Transportation

Lastly, transportation is a barrier to employment. A study done in two California counties found that one in five of the participants needed extra help with school or had been diagnosed with a learning disability (CFPIC, 2008). Many TANF recipients do not have a driver’s license, have no access to a vehicle, or live in areas with little or no public transportation. A California study found two thirds of the participants either had no driver’s license or access to a car. This barrier led to them to not being able to get employment or resulted in their quitting the job because of not being able to get to work. This barrier ranged from 39 percent in one county to as high as 80 percent in another county (CFPIC, 2008).

In addition to the work requirements, the 1996 welfare reform rules added time limits and sanctions to the recipients of TANF. The work rules were supposed to get a recipient off of assistance in a positive way, the person through work would be able to financially support themselves and family. Sanctions and time limits are a punitive and
involuntary way to get people off of cash assistance. The time limits are 60 months maximum in a lifetime. Cash benefits may not continue longer than 60 months with the use of federal money; however, states may continue to provide assistance to families longer than the 60 months using their own resources. There are 10 states that continue aid to families past 60 months, and California is one of them. States also have the option of imposing shorter time limits, 17 states do so, the shortest time limits are in Tennessee where aid is cut after only one year (Bloom, Farrell, Fink, & Adams as cited in Lindhorst, Taryn, Mancoske, & Ronald, 2006).

**Time Limits and Sanctions**

The new time limit policy gives a hardship exemption. This exemption allows states to exclude 20 percent of their caseloads from the time limit rule. The exemption allows the disabled, elderly and those caring for the disabled and elderly to have a time limit extension past the 60 months (Seefeldt & Orzol, 2005).

There have been many concerns following the implementation of the 60-month life-time rule. Many people, who leave welfare, find themselves back at some point. A study found that between 17 and 38 percent return to welfare a year after exiting (ACS & Loprest as cited in Seefeldt & Orzol, 2005). Because a high percentage of recipients cycle on and off of welfare repeatedly, it is not hard to accumulate many months over a few years, leaving many recipients timed out of the system and still unable to financially support themselves and their families.
The families that have a high accumulation of TANF months used have been found to have the same characteristics as those who have multiple barriers to employment. These characteristics include having little education, physical health problems, depression or other emotional problems, entering welfare as a young adult, having young or multiple children, being Hispanic or African American, never being married, and possessing little work experience (Moffitt, et. al, 2002 in Seefeldt et. al., 2005).

Sanctions are another method used to push people off of assistance. Studies have found that more families are affected by sanctions than time limits. Sanction rates range from 5 percent to 52 percent of caseloads. Almost four times as many families will experience a sanction, than timing out of the system (Pavetti, 2003 in Lindhorst et. al, 2006). Sanctions are financial penalties on clients for failing to comply with rules. Some of the rules are mandatory work activities, cooperation in child support enforcement from the absent parent, immunizations for the children and required paperwork (Lindhorst, et. al, 2006). Thirty-six states impose full family sanctions, in seven states non-compliance with work activities leads to ineligibility for a lifetime for TANF (Bloom & Windstead, 2002 in Lindhorst et.al, 2006). Some states, including California impose partial sanctions rather than full family sanctions. A partial sanction reduces the portion of the grant designated for the non-compliant adult, leaving children on the case still eligible for cash assistance. (Goldberg & Schott, 2000 in Wu, Cancian, Meyer, Wallace, 2006).
The characteristics of people who experience sanctions at a higher rate share the characteristics of people who hold more barriers to employment and are likely to time out of the system. People with little education are more than twice as likely to experience a sanction as those who hold a high school diploma. Sanctioned individuals are also more likely to have experienced physical and mental health problems, history of domestic violence, lack of childcare, and inadequate transportation. Sanction rates are also higher among African Americans, people who are younger in age, have multiple children, are native English speaking, and not cohabitating with other adults (Pavetti & Bloom, 2001 in Wu, et. al, 2006).

Sanctions however tend to have a short time span. One study found that three-quarters of sanctioned individuals or cases had restored benefits the following month after sanctioning. Being sanctioned once does not always lead to being sanctioned again. The same study found 64 percent of the individuals to be sanctioned at least once; of the same sample 63 percent were sanctioned a second time, and of those sanctioned twice, 62 percent were sanctioned a third time. About 14 percent had been sanctioned four or more times (Wu, et. al, 2006).

The governor’s budget in 2001 assumed that about four percent of the CalWORKs caseload will have a sanction. Two and a half percent of caseloads are sanctioned due to failure to comply with welfare to work requirements. The remaining one and a half percent are due to other penalties such as non-compliance with child
support services, non-compliance with immunizations for children, and child school attendance problems. (CDSS, 2000).

In July 2011, sanctions are going to be stricter. Currently, only the adult’s portion of the grant is removed in a sanction or penalty. In 2011 the child portion of the case will also be reduced, to a maximum of 50%.

California currently ranks 45th in the country for the federal work participation rate. California is one of only six states in the nation that does not impose a full family sanction. The policy in 2011 will be more in line with policies that other states have adopted. The state has been unable to meet federal welfare to work guidelines, and is in risk of being sanctioned by the federal government. This would mean a loss of millions of dollars to the state, because of penalties. This could mean a loss of $330 million the first year of the sanction, and continue to increase year after year if the state continues to not meet the federal work requirements (Simpson, 2009). California also has a higher than average caseload; 30% of all families who receive cash assistance are in California’s program.

Welfare and Marriage

The 1996 welfare reform act not only emphasized work as a way out of welfare but also marriage. Marriage has been strongly pushed to TANF recipients. Both work and marriage were seen as important strategies to end welfare dependence. In 2006 President George W. Bush allocated 240 million dollars towards programs that promote marriages (Harris & Parisi, 2005).
Married households have lower poverty rates than single households, however, it is not clear whether the positive effects of marriage on economic well-being is due to different behaviors of those who marry, for instance if they are more likely to work, work full-time, and have more financial support from family members (Roberts 2004, in Scott, London & Gross, 2007).

The promotion of marriage has helped to keep old gender ideologies in place. Since the beginning, welfare was guided by certain ideologies. Aid to dependent children (ADC) was a program after the Great Depression, to help widowed or deserted white women care for their children. The program was intended to replace the earnings that a traditional father would have brought to the family. The program changed to Aid to families with Dependent Children and the mother was also eligible to receive benefits; however when the mother on the case became married it usually resulted in the case terminating (Katz, 1996). The termination of assistance, because of the new male in the home, helped to reinforce gender ideologies that the man was the head of the family and was now financially responsible to support the family.

Under TANF, there have been new rules set in place that would not discourage two parent homes. Under AFDC, making the two-parent home immediately ineligible, critics argued that the policy discouraged marriage. Ten states currently have an “earnings disregard” where the new spouses income does not affect eligibility for three to six months regardless of amounts. These states include Alabama, Mississippi, North Dakota, and Oklahoma. In addition to the economic incentives to married couples, some
states have created other forms of direct support to married couples. Some of these programs are marriage components to preexisting programs. (Harris, et. al 2005). Oklahoma is the only state in the union who directly uses TANF money to promote marriage.

There is much criticism to the federal and state advocacy of marriage to TANF recipients. There has been a great amount of research and evidence showing the success of welfare to work programs in combating poverty, however little evidence has shown that marriage is effective in combating poverty. There are also concerns that the promotion of marriage to women on assistance will place them and their children in jeopardy. Women pushed in to marriage would become dependent on a husband, rather than welfare, which was said to be the hope of some conservatives who sponsored the 1996 welfare reform legislation (Albelda, 2002). However, with the dependence on a husband, it would help to force some women to stay in relationships that are abusive. Another problem with the policy is it only represents 10 percent of the current population, the traditional homemaker-breadwinner household (Haskins & Blank 2001, Orth & Goggin, 2003 in Harris, et al, 2005).

Research has been done with TANF recipients on marriage promotion. It was found that many of the women in the study agreed that marriage was a desirable outcome. However, with the reality of their lives and the available men they would likely marry, the women rejected the idea of marriage for themselves. The majority of opinions were
that the women held a preference for mothering and working alone rather than being married and dependent on unreliable men.

The sample showed that the availability of men for marriage was quite limited. There is a high male mortality and incarceration rate in the communities of low-income women. Of the available men who are not incarcerated, many are unemployed, underemployed, suffer from physical or psychological health problems, substance abuse, or have violent histories. There was also a fear from the women in the study that if they did marry, they would be financially responsible for another person (Scott, et al, 2007).

In addition to the previously stated barriers welfare recipients face when accessing services, workers play an essential part in a social welfare program. Factors which affect worker effectiveness include: job satisfaction, role conflict and worker burnout.

Job Satisfaction Among Social Service Employees

Freudenberger coined the term “burnout” in social service literature in 1974. Since this time, many studies have been dedicated to finding the various factors which contribute to worker burnout. Some variables that have been identified are: “workload size, time spent with clients, role conflict/role ambiguity, and work support.” The result of burnout is often job dissatisfaction or the intention to leave the job (Um & Harrison, 1998). It is widely assumed that the stressful conditions under which health and human service employees work contribute to worker burnout. A national study discovered that there are some common themes among child welfare, mental health and family service
workers in terms of job satisfaction levels. The study also argues that there is not a way to address worker burnout generally, but rather reasons for burnout are more likely specific to a particular agency.

The number one predictor of job satisfaction is the opportunity for promotion (Jayaratne & Chess, 1984). Additionally, financial reward was the only common predictor of job satisfaction among workers. Other variables affecting job satisfaction included: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and intent to change jobs. Child welfare workers reported the highest stress levels. In addition, child welfare workers reported having the highest case loads, although their actual case load numbers were much lower. This has been attributed to the nature of the work and further points to the need for individualized agency interventions to lessen worker burnout rates (Jayaratne & Chess, 1984).

Policies and agency protocol have a large impact on workers and clients. Workers have to perform duties under certain constraints which can ultimately contribute the success or failure of a program. For example, based on interviews with senior staff conducted at 107 different nonprofit human service agencies, the implementation of welfare reform in 1996 caused human service workers to have less time for providing services directly to clients and more time managing the regulations of welfare. In spite of these changes, many workers were more concerned with the impact the new legislation was having on their clients than themselves. Seventy-five percent of agency workers interviewed in this study stated that workers were spending more time educating clients
on new welfare rules than providing clinical support. Increased demands for paperwork among workers and helping clients who were being penalized by the new rules also prevented workers from addressing the needs of the clients. Many social workers reported feeling that they were being pushed to the edge of ethics because they were unable to put their clients first with all of the new social policy demands which focused on carrying out mandates (Abramovitz, 2005).

Role Conflict and Burnout

Studies have indicated that one heavily apparent source of worker stress in the field of social work is “role conflict.” Stress develops among professionals when they are assaulted by expectations of agency protocol versus client advocacy. Stress can be defined as the biological and emotional response to stressors. Stressors are those situations or triggers which cause a person to experience increased autonomic arousal and shifts equilibrium. Stress which continues over time can cause physical and mental health to deteriorate. In addition to this, many workers report that exhaustion is preventing them from being available to provide emotional support to their clients (Lloyd, 2002).

One variable associated with job satisfaction, under stressful conditions, is social support. Workers have identified that it is especially helpful to have the support of co-workers and supervisors. A means of alleviating role conflict of workers has been identified as “orientation to the agency.” It was found that social workers are often receiving mixed or conflicting information in terms of protocol and rules. Therefore, one way to discourage confusion is to have ongoing staff trainings and orientation in place.
These supportive staff meetings could also incorporate self care information which would offer strategies and coping skills (Lloyd, 2002).

In addition to staff meetings, a worker peer support group has may be beneficial in reducing role conflict and stress among workers. This group should involve team building and networking. Worker burnout is often not a result of individual character flaws among workers, but rather a result of an internal system of conflict which results in job dissatisfaction. Agencies are encouraged to work towards creating a work environment which seeks to improve communication and offer support to workers (Ambramovitz, 2005).

Another highly regarded defense against worker burnout is the utilization of supervision among social service workers. Social workers are often in consultation with a supervisor regarding case concerns and skill improvement. The emotional support of a supervisor acts as a buffer to stress among workers. Workers report that when they feel supported by supervisors and are part of a team, there is less stress and role conflict in their work. However, workers were more likely to feel the effects of burnout if they felt their supervisors were focused on protecting themselves (Lloyd, 2002).

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) has been a leading tool for the past 15 years in measuring burnout among workers in the health and human services field. Worker burnout has been a great concern among professional for the past two decades. Poor working conditions, low wages, stress, work demands and under- recognition among
others contributes to worker stress. Social workers are among the most studied within the burnout literature; child-welfare workers are most often studied.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (BMI) takes into account the relationship between 3 elements: “emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment (Yadama & Drake, 1995).” Disagreements still exist about the relationship of the three related factors contributing to worker burnout by this scale (MBI). Although in most studies all three were seen as necessary components to the result of worker burnout; the order in which they are rated or occur varies. In one study, emotional exhaustion was seen as a reflection of depersonalization. Other research indicated that depersonalization comes after the emotional exhaustion of a worker. Some studies emphasize that emotional exhaustion in and of itself was enough to cause a worker to burnout (Yadama & Drake, 1995).

Conclusion

These topics were included in order to give a better understanding of the various factors affecting the success of a welfare program. History, policies and relationship of welfare workers and clients all seem to have an important role in how clients respond to a government program. Additionally, job satisfaction and burnout among workers in the human service are important factors affecting various agencies and programs.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Interviews were conducted in this exploratory study in order to obtain narrative data from the sources and to learn about the perspectives of the clients and practitioners within CalWORKs. The qualitative approach values the voices of people and considers them to be experts of their experience. A researcher goes into the study with the intent to gather information without any pre-judgment or assumptions of what will be collected from the participants. The goal is not to test a research hypothesis.

This research project is being conducted through the Sacramento County CalWORKs program. This informal program evaluation of CalWORKs aims to discover what may contribute to a “successful” or positive experience with the program. It is necessary for the researcher to provide an environment of atmosphere in which the client or worker can respond with honesty and accuracy (Patton, 2002). The importance of diligence and skill of the interviewer is apparent to those considering this type of data collection (Patton, 2002).

Study Purpose

The primary purpose of this study is to learn from clients and workers what their unique and similar experiences are in regards to involvement in the CalWORKs program. The secondary purpose of this study is to find any gaps in services or themes which appear that suggestion for improvement can be made. The ten workers and clients make
up a diverse selection of male and female, older and younger, as well as different ethnicities including: Caucasian, Asian, Latino, and African-American.

Design and Sample

For the research data collection ten workers and ten clients are being interviewed with ten open-ended questions. The questions were chosen to elicit lengthy and personalized responses. In addition, this research design seeks to generate conceptual themes. The worker’s responses will be analyzed to find themes among workers. At the same time, the client’s interviews will be compared and analyzed. Beyond this, a comparison will be made between the worker’s and client’s perceptions in order to identify any discrepancies or points of interest for further evaluation or research. The questions of both workers and clients are designed to promote an understanding of barriers to employment from the different views. Understanding the experiences, this exploratory study may provide some insight into the reasons why the CalWORKs program numbers have remained consistent over the years.

Participants in this study were prompted by these questions to add any additional thoughts or information due to open-ended questions. There were no incentives for either workers or clients to participate in this study. Workers were recruited by a posting in the lunch room and through an announcement at the bureau’s monthly meeting. Worker interviews were completed during worker’s off hours.
Data Collection

Since there are two researchers for this thesis project, the first researcher, who works for the Department of Human Assistance in Sacramento County, is interviewing ten clients from her case load. The clients are being chosen based on convenience sampling and by their willingness to participate in the interviews. The second interviewer will be interviewing ten workers or Human Assistance Specialists.

Data Analysis

In order to discover emerging themes, the interviewers are first transcribing the tapes and collecting notes on the questionnaires as the tapes are reviewed. While listening to the tapes, interviewers are incorporating commonalities, divergent responses, follow-up questions and other information brought up by those who are interviewed in order to find themes. The interviewers are meeting with their professor to debrief after the interview process and connect ideas and themes.

Protection of Human Subjects

Before the initiation of data collection, protection of the human subjects was insured by completion of the Human Subjects Protocol. The privacy and safety is being protected as clients are interviewed in the researcher’s office. Clients are being informed that their participation is completely voluntary and in no way will there non-participation, participation or answers affect the services they are receiving. Workers were interviewed if they were willing to participate and both workers and clients signed a consent form. No identifying information was used in the reporting of data for either clients or workers.
Clients and worker’s names are not be used during the collection and storage of research. Clients and workers are assigned a number instead. All interview tapes are kept in a locked drawer, listened to only by the researchers and destroyed once the data evaluation is complete. Clients are being asked questions similar to what they would be asked in an interview for services. This study was approved as minimal risk (# 09-10-001).
Chapter 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

Findings are included from ten interviews with Department of Human Assistance workers. These findings come from a range of experience including age, years with the agency and education level. By interviewing workers of diverse backgrounds, the researcher was able to gather information and perceptions with many differences as well as similarities. Workers were asked a variety of questions relating to their experience and professional opinions. These questions were used to elicit overall themes for discussion. The themes which came to surface throughout the 10 interviews are: uninfluenced motivation, generational aid, gaps in services, the current economy and worker perceptions of client’s strengths.

Additionally, findings are included from ten interviews with clients who are currently in CalWORKs and Welfare to Work programs. Interviews were conducted and included a diverse variety of backgrounds, age, ethnicity, and education level. The overall themes that emerged in the interviews are: use of ancillary services, involvement in Sacramento County’s Job Club or Community Work Experience program (CWEX), perception of program value, suggestions from clients on Welfare to Work services, motivation for Welfare to Work engagement, additional services utilized by clients, perceived effect of economic recession, barriers to gaining employment and returning to assistance.
Demographics of Workers

Ten workers from the Department of Human Assistance were interviewed. Nine of the ten workers were Human Service Specialists. Workers are provided referrals to continue working with clients and do not provide initial intake assessments for clients. One Community Work Experience coordinator was also interviewed. Of the workers who were interviewed, 90% were female and ten percent or one male was interviewed.

Work experience at the Department of Human Assistance averaged at 7.8 years per worker—the least amount of time was two years and the greatest was over 20 years. The average age of the worker was 40 years old. The youngest interviewed was 25 years old, and the oldest was 55 years old.

Education level varied, but all workers had at least some college in their history. Two workers did not have a college. Three workers had at least an Associate’s Degree. Three workers had a Bachelor’s in Social Work, and another had a Bachelor’s in Psychology. One worker had a Master’s Degree in Social Work.

Uninfluenced Motivation

Workers emphasized the client’s personal motivation as a major factor contributing to client circumstances. Most of the workers had identified “successful clients” as only those who were able to “get off of aid.” Many workers felt that clients would only get off of aid if they were motivated. Some workers thought that clients are either motivated or not, and there is not anything a person can do to influence whether a client has personal motivation. Others stated that sanctions were a way to motivate
clients. Additionally, there was a discrepancy of worker opinions about two-parent homes having a positive or negative affect on a recipient’s situation.

One bachelor level worker, with only a few years at DHA, stated that a large barrier for employment is lack of motivation,

Many (clients) are unmotivated and do not want to work or get a job. These are clients who are scared and do not know other way than to receive aid…the only motivators we have, unfortunately, are sanctions—a lot of it is personal motivation. Sometimes, free childcare and transportation can help to motivate clients, but a lot of times it is them and whether or not they want to get off of aid.

This worker also felt that two parent homes were more successful in getting off of CalWORKs because, “they can motivate each other. One (parent) can get a job while the other goes to school. Childcare helps because one of the parents can watch the kids; however, there are some cases where neither (parent) wants to work.” The worker said that if it is a true partnership then there will be increased motivation to take care of business for the family.

Another worker, who has been working in this field for over 20 years, said that there needs to be more penalties for not working. When asked about barriers which keep clients from working, this worker stated that “sanctions do not work because clients can go above the worker to get it removed.” This worker responded to a subsequent questions about how to motivate clients and replied,
…learning about opportunities and services sometimes motivates; however, I do not think we have the power to motivate them. They either want to do it or not. We can cut their grant. Clients get low paying jobs. They do not know how to stick with it. They do not have any follow through or future plans. They do not know how to prioritize. The ones who stay off (welfare) are working and willing to get training. Single women are more motivated, in my experience. If there is a man he is usually just not interested in getting off of aid and he is lazy. The women want a better life for the kids.

In contrast, a bachelor’s level worker who has been working for DHA for only two years shared with the researcher that,

Sometimes, it is their way of thinking. It is hard for them to see that they can do more or be motivated. They are stuck…referrals to social workers can be helpful, if it is a good one. Some social workers will help clients move from victim thinking to capable thinking. Sometimes there are the good social workers, who will encourage and motivate clients to do better, and there are others who are not timely and do not help…Depends on clients. Some have personal motivation. Money is a big motivator, but I try to encourage school. Sanctioning works to get people engaged. They do not think they have an issue sometimes. For example, someone on drugs does not believe it is an issue until someone shows them or their life falls apart. Sanctioning makes it an issue for them…most clients do not save money and learn dependent thinking. I can only think of one (client on my
caseload) who has achieved independence—she was working hard, diligent, calling me and on top of things.

One worker who has been with the agency for over 10 years felt that sanctions, jobs that clients are placed in and personal motivation are the keys in getting clients engaged in their program. The worker states, “It depends where they are mentally; some have the will to get off and do.” This worker also shared about two-parent households on her case load saying, “two-parent homes are going to school more to get hours, but I do not see them getting off of aid faster.” This answer further shows that some feel the program is about getting off of aid versus going to school and getting a good job. Many workers talked about clients only getting temporary or low-paying jobs which results in a return to assistance. However, going to school seems to be looked down upon in some cases as workers have shared opinions such as, “they are going to school on our dime.”

Another bachelor’s level worker with only a few years at DHA shared the following in response to “what are the barriers you see that are keeping your clients from working?”

…transportation, lack of job skills, mental issues and they do not want to work, just want to go to school and want us to support them. What are good motivators? Sometimes, talking about the ‘time-clock,’ options available, services, childcare and sanctions—which new clients take more seriously.

Surprisingly, the same worker said that the strengths seen in clients include: personal motivation—the ones in school or finding work and persistence in looking for work.
One worker with a few years at DHA and nearing a bachelor’s degree said,

The whole system is a barrier which keeps clients from working. We give them excuse after excuse. That does not work in the real world. The system enables them. Taking away money is the only thing that works. Some are very motivated and some are not. You can tell they never want to get off (aid). It helps to get to them when they are new to aid and intervene.

A common theme which emerged during several interviews was the language of us and them. Clients were often referred to as “them.” Nothing motivates them. They have no motivation. This language seemed to foster a hierarchy, elitist or expert role of the worker.

One worker at Master’s level with over 10 years at DHA said,

The only motivator is sanctioning. Some are motivated. The younger ones seem like they want to be engaged. They view it as a stepping stone and are willing to work and go to school. There are also the ones who have been on aid all their life and do not want that for their kids. The older ones (recipients) have no motivation or strengths. There was one successful client on my case load who initially came in with attitude, and I encouraged her. She came from a family where they worked. Her pregnancy was not planned and that is what led her to the situation of being on aid. She was not generational welfare.

One worker interviewed with some college and little time with DHA said,

“Money, childcare and sanctioning are the only ways to motivate clients. Lack of
motivation causes them to return to welfare and personal motivation; the ones who
transition out are successful. A single mom with three kids can do it.”

After speaking with all 10 interviewees on the topic of motivation, it was found
that there is a belief that personal motivation is a main factor in the success of a person in
the welfare to work program. Only 2 of 10 workers stated that this motivation could be
influenced or encouraged. It appeared that many thought the responsibility of finding a
job and maintaining employment rested in the individual’s capability and desire.
Environmental factors affecting employment are later explored in a discussion of the
current economy, but many other factors of the environment seem to be left out. It seems
that the workers interviewed have conflicting opinions and a belief stating in one case
that motivation was a barrier for and also strength of clients. The system seems to have
policies and regulations which limit a worker’s ability to see the broader picture and help
clients navigate. One worker shared that a client on her caseload wanted to become a
registered nurse. The worker said that this was not part of the client’s welfare to work
plan and suggested she take a sanction if this was her goal. On one hand, workers
complained that clients return to welfare repeatedly, and on the other hand, higher
education is not rewarded.

In regard to the discussion over whether or not two-parent homes were more
successful in getting off of aid, the responses varied from worker to worker. It seems that
it would depend on the individual situation in deciding if it were helpful or not. Previous
policy, as outlined in the literature review, rewarded couples who got married. This
would further confirm that marriage should not be a condition of incentive for recipients. In some cases, two-parent homes provide the stability and security for one parent to attend school while the other works or for one parent to provide childcare while the other works. There seem to be just as many cases, however, where one parent does not work or even both. The overall responses indicated that if the relationship between the two parents were a partnership with motivation, the two-parent home would be more successful.

Generational Aid

In addition to personal motivation, another theme emerging from the interviews with workers was their perceptions about the influence of generational aid on a recipient. There seemed to be an overall belief among workers that clients, coming from families who received aid would continue to do so. Many workers felt that clients who were newer to aid would be more successful in getting a job and keeping it. Several workers had referenced the economic crisis that brought them formerly employed individuals who they felt would be able to regain employment and had skills to maintain it. Four out of ten workers stated that lack of parental structure or role models growing up were number one barriers for clients and created a dependency on the public system for generations. One worker said,

Clients who come from families where there is a dependency on the system do not have the skills to get off of aid. They grew up and never learned about going to work. They have not learned how to be responsible. Often, they have kids without
planning and do not arrange to finish school... A couple months ago a client got a full-time job. She was not previously receiving aid. She started (aid) in her 30’s and had a job before. Another was hired after completing CWEC, and has been off of aid for 6 months—she came from a low-income family and a history of aid. The ones who stay off (aid) are working and willing to get training.

Two out of ten workers talked about being scared if they were not receiving aid because it had become a way of life for them. One worker said, “Dependency on the system causes them to cycle on and off. They go off and get scared because they do not have a guaranteed check. I feel that some lose their job on purpose. They need awareness; it’s not a way of life, just assistance. They need to have more accountability and responsibility.”

A master’s level worker talking about generational aid stated,

Those who return to aid have no role models or parents who got up in the morning to go to work. They lack common job skills such as arranging for reliable transportation for work. For example, they may have a friend drive them to work versus learning how to take the bus. Once the friend is late or does not show to pick them up then they miss work and eventually lose their job. I had a successful client who went to City College and was hired on by an insurance company. She was not generational welfare and her family worked.

Another worker without any college degree and many years at DHA said,
The main barrier for clients getting employment is that they do not want to work. Some get dependent and grew up on it (aid). It becomes a way of life for them, and it is easy to get back on. Some come back after employment. They could not follow the rules or were not cut out for the job. Some have low self-confidence and no skills... Individuals who have not been on very long and who do not want to be on aid are the ones who have strengths. These are the ones who are not used to assistance. They are non-generational... Some clients have family that can help... it is too easy to get back on aid. There are always extensions which create dependency, and I feel sorry for the kids.

Gaps in Services

Besides the stated impact of generational welfare, gaps in services were identified by workers as also contributing to a client’s inability to gain or maintain employment. Every day, workers at DHA have the ability to make a variety of referrals for their clients. There are standard referrals which some workers view as helpful, and then there are the ones that do not count for the welfare to work plan but would be viewed as an improvement. Nine out of ten workers talked about life skills as an important piece affecting whether a person would be successful in getting off of aid. Many identified life skills as practical common sense tools necessary for gaining independences such as, budgeting, learning to balance a check book, prioritizing, learning the value of money, learning to ride the bus, on the job training and a literacy program. Three out of ten workers said it would be beneficial if the clients had to report to someone on their
progress if they are on their own job search. Notably, one out of ten workers said that the quality of the relationship with the worker—holding them accountable—would be a main determinant in the success of the client.

One worker with less than 3 years working for DHA talked about lack of education and skills as a main barrier for clients. This worker’s main referrals were job club, CWEX and vocational training or schooling. The worker suggested that the following would create improvement in the current system: more parenting classes, more accountable public schools, reduction of aid for adults with able bodies, better systems to reduce substance usage and helping clients understand the perception of taking a low-paying job. Another worker with over 20 years at DHA said English as a second language classes are needed, but they are not available or a core activity. She also stated that clients, “need a good supervisor to be reporting to someone, getting out, checking the paper, and we already have job club.” This worker mentioned that skills training would be a logical starting point to employment while learning about opportunities and services. One interviewee stated,

The barriers I see for my clients are lack of job skills, lack of education and illiteracy. One of my clients could not even get an interview because she did not have a GED (General Education Diploma). I make a lot of referrals to CWEX, and I really believe in that program. I make mental health referrals for things like depression, and we have an LMFT (Licensed Marriage Family Therapist) on site. We need to have more on the job training, a literacy program—we do not have
one. A GED or adult school program in house and life skills or budgeting classes are needed. Clients end up coming back to assistance because hours get cut, they lose their jobs, and some contract for temp work and that runs out. People then come back to aid. The type of job is what affects this; they are low skill jobs. Workers seemed to have referrals which they felt were beneficial, but they identified the need for more services such is the case with the next interviewee who has only two years at DHA,

The transportation system in Sacramento in not the best, and it is especially hard for clients without a vehicle to get around to different jobs. Some of my clients have jobs and others go to school. I ensure that all clients on my case load go through the counseling process at junior college. Some drop out after this process when they see how much it entails. Some go to Heald College and already have jobs lined up in medical billing. My clients who are going through job club are not getting jobs. I make many referrals to CWEX, mental health and AOD (Alcohol and Drug Services). I send people to VAC (Vocational Assessment Counselor) so they can get educated on options. Kaplan College is too expensive, but it looks at client skill sets and advises them on a good fit. I make referrals to social workers if it is a good social worker. Some social workers are able to help clients move from victim thinking to capable thinking. There are social workers who encourage and motivate while others are less effective, untimely and do not help. I think a good addition to services offered is client coaching—many clients
are living in the here and now and fail to make any future plans or goals. A coach would help them, similar to mental health or social work, in one on one sessions. The coaching would increase self-realization and life skills. The coach could help them to understand immediate gratification versus long-term. For example, a client would be coached on budgeting to make money last through the whole month and other tips such as buying non-brand name items.

This worker also said that the ability to work in teams would be a crucial aspect of the success in getting off of aid. The worker felt that lack of skills, a feeling of entitlement, seasonal or temporary jobs, low paying jobs loss of childcare and no savings subsequently lead to job loss and returning to aid. The worker said that her most successful clients were the ones who decided to go to school. She also said, “We have to be realistic though. Not everyone is ready to begin school. Some discipline is required for school.” The worker stated she felt it is not her job to give clients a check. She said her job is “to get clients off of the system.” Surprisingly, the worker was only able to identify one client who had achieved independence from welfare assistance.

There are a variety of opinions held by workers about what the actual gaps in services are, but nine out of ten agreed that the best addition to the current welfare program would be a life skills class or coach. One worker talked about how social workers used to take clients to their first appointments or physically show them how to use public transit, and the clients were more successful. The life skills might include how to get a bank account, find housing, make doctor appointments, and enroll children in
school or how to utilize resources in the community, use computers and interview for jobs.

The Economy

Due to the current economic recession, researchers felt it important to include a question about the perceived impact on clients. Interviewees were asked, “How do you think the current economy has affected your clients in securing or maintaining employment?” Three out of ten workers said that there was absolutely no affect on client’s ability to gain or maintain employment due to the economy. Six out of ten said that there was a definite impact on clients, and one said they do not know whether or not it has created another barrier.

One worker said that it hasn’t affected clients anymore than any other person and “it just gives them an excuse not to do anything.” Another worker talked about the economy having less of an impact that one would expect. He said that “low paying jobs are still out there.” This worker felt that the newer clients on his case load would not be on aid for long. He mentioned that he had a client on his case load who had previously worked in real estate. The client only stayed on CalWORKs assistance for a short time. The worker felt that the recession psychologically influences people not to look for a job. The third worker who said there is not an effect stated that the clients choose not to go out and look for work or participate in the program—it is not the economy.

The majority, sixty percent, felt that the economy was affecting people in their search for work. One of the more memorable statements of a worker was about the cuts
to MediCal dental. She said, “MediCal dental was cut so some can’t get teeth, and the employer will not even bother to hire someone who does not have teeth.” This worker also brought up a significant point that now people who do not have high school diplomas or work history are competing with degreed people for jobs; however, another interviewee said that people with degrees are having a harder time finding work than those who do not have any education. The worker felt most of the jobs that are available now are in healthcare and only require a specialized certificate to do medical billing or nurse assisting. Another worker talked about having a computer scientist on her caseload who could not get a job stating that many clients in CalWORKs now have a strong work history, but they are unable to get a job. Similarly, a worker shared that most of what is available is part-time work. She said that some of her clients made great salaries before and now only have a specialized skill in a job area that is not available anymore.

**Strengths**

It was important to the researchers to include a question that would prompt workers to identify what they feel some of their clients strengths are. Seven out of ten workers were able to identify key strengths they saw in their current clients. However, three out of ten could not identify any strengths. One of the three said the younger clients, who are new to the system, had strengths, but the older clients had no strengths. Another responded, “That’s a hard one.” The worker felt that they only had strengths if they were non-generational welfare recipients.
Of the workers who identified client strengths, many agreed personal motivation was a strength they saw in their clients; contrary to earlier statements by several workers that they felt many of their clients lacked any sort of personal motivation. Three out of ten workers stated that they see many of their clients are survivors, and that this is a huge strength. The three workers who saw clients as survivors talked about clients being survivors of domestic abuse and their ability to maintain a family household on such a low income.

A worker with less than four years at DHA identified the following strengths of his clients: creativity in getting aid, raising kids in a one-parent home, coping with stress, sufficient English skills, ability to put up with an uneasy aid system and deciding to go to school or training. Similarly an interviewee with less than three years identified: the ability to overcome, endurance, diligence, work ethics and surviving when unemployed. Others said strengths were youth, not being of generational welfare, persistence, being engaging and wanting more for their family.

**Conclusion**

There was a great diversity of responses among workers in DHA; however, all but 2 of the 10 workers felt that motivation was fixed and could not be influenced. The majority of the workers perceived that a person either has motivation to get off of assistance or they do not and never will. Interestingly, only one worker identified the relationship of the client and worker as having any relevance to the client’s success in the program.
Three of the workers stated that the economy was not having any effect on client’s ability to gain or maintain employment. Many of the workers felt that “generational welfare” was the biggest predictor in whether or not the client would be successful. Workers stated, if a client was newer to the system, they would be more likely to get off of aid and stay off. Three out of ten workers could not identify any of their client’s strengths.

Workers made several recommendations for program improvement such as coaching and skills training which will be taken into consideration when making conclusions and recommendations for the CalWORKs program. When analyzing the qualitative data from the 10 clients who were involved in Sacramento County’s CalWORKs program, various themes emerged. That will be discussed after the presentation of the clients’ demographic date.

Demographic Breakdown of CalWORKs Clients

The ten people interviewed in the sample were diverse in terms of age, ethnicity, and education. Thirty percent described themselves as Caucasian, thirty percent as African American, thirty percent as Hispanic, or Hispanic and Caucasian and ten percent as Native American/Caucasian. Ninety percent of the participants were female, while only one interviewee male.

The average age of the participants was 29, with the oldest being 41 and the youngest interviewee being 21. Fifty percent of the participants had less than a high school education, twenty percent had a high school diploma and 30 percent had a high
school education as well as either an Associate’s degree, or a certificate of completion in a trade. All of the participants stated that they would like to continue with their education. The average amount of children that the participants had was two, ranging from four children to one. The average age of the participants when they had their first child was 19 years old.

Work History

Clients who had a job history 70% worked in customer service, temporary jobs and retail. Twenty percent of the participants had care-giving jobs in the past. Both of the participants involved in care giving jobs had been employed by Sacramento County’s In Home Supportive Services program. One female participant had a variety of experience in retail, housekeeping, motel clerk work and clerical.

I was a housekeeper at fifteen. I worked at a beauty supply company for a couple months, I worked at a grocery store for a year and a half, I worked at a Motel 6, a little bit of everything. It helps open up your array of job opportunities. I was also a caregiver to my Aunt for a couple years before she passed away.

One male participant had years of construction work experience in a variety of trades, before he received certificates as an automotive technician and began working in the automotive field. One participant had work experience as a bus driver, but had a hard time finding and retaining these jobs because of problems in her background check. Only one of the participants, a 21-year-old Hispanic female, had gained employment through
completed a certificate program. She went to school to become a pharmacy tech, and after six months of looking found a job at a pharmacy outside of Sacramento County.

Use of Ancillary Services

All of the participants interviewed utilized the ancillary services offered through the county in one manner or another. One hundred percent of the participants stated that they used transportation benefits. Ninety percent used the childcare payments. Each of the participants stated how valuable the ancillary services were and that without the childcare they would not have been able to participate in Welfare to Work. Childcare, although valuable, did not appear to come without some headaches along the way. Most of the participants stated that they referral system was slow. Due to this break down in the system, it resulted in slow enrollment in the childcare program (Child Action). Many payments to childcare providers were slow and backed up for months, or payment forms were lost all together. Sometimes childcare providers would drop the client’s children from care because of lack of payment from the county. This created huge problems for the participants who were participating in Welfare to Work activity. Without childcare, the participants had to drop out of the program that they were attending. A 25-year-old Caucasian female stated,

Childcare is a big stress even with being on Child Action. Some childcare providers don’t want to watch kids on Child Action. If you don’t have childcare you can’t work.
Transportation was also seen as very valuable. A common theme when transportation was discussed was that sometimes the transportation was difficult to obtain. A worker may not issue funds to pay for transportation for months at a time, or there was a fight in order to get it at all. One Hispanic, 24-year-old female reported a very difficult time receiving her transportation from her worker.

It is a constant battle with my worker to get my transportation check. She is never on what she is supposed to do. I never get my check on time. I have not received a check in three months now, and it makes it hard to get here (CWEX placement) for my Welfare to Work.

One participant a 28-year-old African American female, utilized most of the ancillary services offered through the county. She was able to receive transportation, childcare, money for books, and a rare item, having the county pay for repairs on her vehicle. She was able to receive money to repair her vehicle because she used it as transportation to get to her Welfare to Work activity. She stated because of the county’s help with all of the stated services, she was able to obtain her Associates degree in Social Sciences.

Involvement in Sacramento County’s Job Club or CWEX Program

Job Club is a six-week program that acts like a job readiness work shop. The client reports to the program Monday through Friday for eight hours a day. In the workshop résumé writing skills are taught, interviewing techniques, filling out applications and how to search for work. Recruiters from businesses that are hiring will
also come to the program to speak about the company and what job openings are available.

Community Work Experience (CWEX) is a volunteer program. The program is volunteer work in a variety of settings from Sacramento Parks and Recreation, to the Salvation Army, to Mercy Hospital. Based on background, job skills and interests a client will be placed and will work at a particular placement. The time in the placement varies based on how it is working out for the client as well as the placement.

None of the research participants had finished the Job Club program. One participant had been involved in the program a long time ago, however the program was in a different county. A second male participant went to Sacramento’s Job Club program for a few days, but dropped out of the program due to being sick. He stated that he thought the program would have been really helpful in finding employment and freshening up his résumé if he had been able to finish it. One 28 year old African American participant stated that she had asked her worker on numerous occasions to enroll her in to the Job Club program, but the worker never enrolled her. She is now currently involved in the CWEX program and has found it very beneficial. She has now gained a part time job working as an office assistant at one of the area’s private colleges.

Half of the participants reported being involved in the Sacramento County CWEX program, four of the participants are currently in the program and all report enjoying it. The participants also believe they are gaining valuable skills from the program and hope
it will help in gaining employment. One 25 year old Caucasian participants reported very highly on her CWEX placement,

I love CWEX, the people are friendly. I am able to come in and do my work and feel good about myself, it gives me self-esteem. I am gaining valuable skills, and know it will help my résumé look good. I am learning office work and computer skills. I know a couple people who have gotten jobs from the program.

It was alarming that forty percent of the participants were not involved in either program. Two of the four had never heard of either program, and were also currently timed out; they had used up all of their 60 months of assistance. This may be due to workers never enforcing welfare to work and not enrolling the clients in a program. These two clients represent a portion of the CalWORKs population who have slipped through the cracks, timing out before ever being able to gain any Welfare to Work benefits from the program.

Perception of Program Value

Due to 40% of the participants not being involved in either of Sacramento County’s Job Club or CWEX programs, forty percent of the participants could not say the program was helpful in gaining employment. Of the remaining 60%, all found the programs to be helpful in gaining employment. The participants each expressed high hopes of the programs helping in improving résumés, and valued greatly the skills they were learning through the programs.
One 28 year old African American female, stated that the gaining of her new part-time job was a direct result of the skills she gained in the CWEX program, and being able to use Sacramento County as a reputable reference. The program has been very helpful. I feel that if it had not been for the County helping me expand my skills, and helping me learn new skills, I wouldn’t have been able to get my evening job at (Area private college). Also it kind of, it did too gave me the confidence to be able to go to interviews, to deal with people who are in higher rankings then myself. So it (CWEX) has helped me a lot.

A second participant a 31 year old Caucasian female has been in CWEX on two different occasions and attended job club a long time ago. She found both programs to be very helpful in finding employment. She stated,

The program (CWEX) is very helpful, if it wasn’t for the way the economy is right now, I would probably already have a job. I really like the CWEX program I have gained a lot of skills and really like it here (CWEX placement) I wish I could get hired here. Job Club was a pretty good program. As long as you follow the rules and do what you are suppose to do. It helps you learn how to write your résumé and helps with your interview skills.

Suggestions for Welfare to Work Services

Thirty percent of the participants stated that if the county offered on the job training or some form of subsidized employment, it would be helpful. The participants who stated this said that on the job training would be different from Community Work
Experience (CWEX) program because they would be able to train for a job that would hire them on permanently. (The CWEX program usually has to potential to turn the community service placement in to a paid position, however because of the economy; CWEX providers have been unable to do this).

Two different themes that emerged from the interviews with two of the participants involved were large barriers that keep clients from gaining employment. These barriers are not addressed through services provided under the Welfare to Work program. One of these barriers was help with expungement of criminal backgrounds. A 32 year old African American female stated,

I don’t know of any Welfare to Work programs that could help me. I am unable to find employment because of my criminal background. I just need help paying fines and getting it off my record.

This particular participant had stated there were many jobs she could apply for in her field, however due to her record she never was able to get hired. She had before worked without disclosing her record, but once found out was always let go. She also stated she would be able to get off of assistance and survive on her own financially if she was able to gain a job in her field.

A second participant’s need was for clothing. Many times when a client is in need of work clothes, they are referred to a career closet, where donated clothes are available. However, most of these clothes consist of business attire, suits, slacks, and collared shirts.
This particular participant described the need for clothing for people in trade type jobs where boots and coveralls are needed. He stated,

The clothes closet is great for suits and ties and everything else. They don’t have coveralls, they don’t have anything to actually go in to the job. That is the most expensive part of it. To get a good set of coveralls I have paid up to eighty five dollars, and a good pair of work boots can cost up to 200 dollars. That is the problem I have been having in finding a job.

Lastly, the participants state if the workers were more supportive that job findings and training efforts would be more effective. Three different participants stated that more support from workers, meaning things such as more encouragement, more cooperation, and a more caring attitude. A 24 year old Hispanic female stated,

I don’t know, maybe more help. Help from the worker, or just more help and support from the staff in trying to get clients off of welfare. I think that would help a lot of people. Maybe so many people wouldn’t be on aid, if the workers were more supportive.

What was found in the interview process was a few of the participants had little knowledge about Welfare to Work programs and the requirements of the program. Some stated that they didn’t even know it was a requirement in being on the CalWORKs program. Another element that was discovered in the interviews was the inconsistency among workers. Some workers stress Welfare to Work, others don’t explain it at all, or fail to enroll clients in programs even upon the request of the client.
Motivation for Welfare to Work Engagement

Participants gave various reasons that they were motivated to work. Some stated that they were tired of being home all day and wanted to get out of the house and do something. A second motivator was the participant’s children, and wanting more for them, and to be a good role model. The participants wanted to show their children that they were doing something constructive with their lives. The participants had hopes of getting off of assistance with the help of the Welfare to Work program. The hope was the program could help them gain skills, and would enable them to find and be eligible for employment. A 41 year old Native American male stated,

My motivation is to get off of welfare and to get back to work. I want to work, I don’t like being on welfare at all, I would rather be working.

Only two participants were motivated by the threat of a sanction on their cases. Both participants stated motivation came from the fact that their workers said if they did not participate they would be sanctioned. Neither participant could financially afford to lose a portion of their grant.

Only one of the participants, a 32 year old African American female, did not feel motivated to engage in Welfare to Work at all. She is currently timed out, but stated when she was not timed out she never engaged in the Welfare to Work program, and never knew it was a requirement. She stated,

Nothing has caught my eye, I can’t really think of anything. The videos that are shown during orientation are no good to me. I have experience; I know how to
look for a job. The only thing holding me back is my background. If they could help me with expungement, that would have motivated me.

What this statement helps to represent, is the population of participants who lack motivation because what they are looking for in the program is not offered or available. Many clients have job experience, or know how to look for work but what they need to find a job runs deeper or is more complicated than what can be taught in the CWEX or Job Club programs.

Additional Services Utilized

Forty percent of the participants are involved in the CWEX program. Due to being in the program regular interaction with a CWEX coordinator is a requirement. This was the most common additional service utilized in the Welfare to Work program outside of the participants regular worker. The coordinator helps the participant with their progress, and assists when issues arise at the placement. They act as a liaison between the County and the placement.

An alarming theme was overall the participants had not utilized anyone outside of their CalWORKs worker. Only one participant had seen the Vocational Assessment Counselor (VAC). The VAC helps a client with assessing for learning disabilities, and assesses what Welfare to Work activity would be a best match. None of the participants had utilized the Mental Health counselors, AOD counselors, CalWORKs social workers, or the CalWORKs workers who work with the Los Rios Community College district.
This finding indicates the pervasiveness of clients’ not being assessed for the correct Welfare to Work activities, not being informed of the different activity options available, and falling through the cracks all together. Thirty percent of the participants in the study had already used up the lifetime 60 month time limit, and had not utilized the majority of the Welfare to Work services available to them before they timed out. This small sample may represent clients who received assistance and exhausted their time limits without ever utilizing and gaining from the CalWORKs and Welfare to Work programs. Representing a complete failure of what the program is suppose to be achieving.

Perceived Effect of the Recession

The common theme was the economy has greatly affected finding and gaining employment. Ninety percent of the participants stated that it was very difficult to find a job in this current economy. The participants with a background in retail stated that before it was no problem finding work at one of the retail stores, but now it is hard to come by, and when you apply there is so much competition for the available positions.

Many of the jobs that are available require a lot of experience in the field or require certain certificates, trainings or education to be eligible.

One of the participants stated that at the Sacramento County job talk that is held each week, there used to be a lot of jobs posted to apply for and now there are fewer, those that are posted require certain certificates or experience. Sacramento job talk is an open to the public meeting that has job listings for openings in the area as well as guest speaker
recruiters that are trying to fill positions. One male 41 year old participant bluntly stated about the economy,

It sucks, it’s very limited, for the jobs that I qualify for and have the experience for. There are a number of other jobs out there that I would gladly do, but I have tried to apply for those and was told that I was over qualified. I have tried to apply for warehouse work but have been turned down because they fear I will quit after a couple months when something else comes along. They don’t want someone there for six months, they want you long term.

Another participant, a 21 year old female, had graduated from her pharmacy technician program over six months prior to our interview. She had found it very challenging and time consuming in finding employment. She stated,

I graduated in June and have been looking for work since then. I just got hired on at CVS pharmacy in Davis. I could not find anything in Sacramento. So the market is very hard. I would tell anyone looking for work that they have to leave Sacramento to find it.

Only one participant stated the economy was not affecting her finding a job, she said the reason she has not been able to find employment because of issues that come up in her background check. If it was not for the background issues, she would be able to find a job easily in her profession.
The current economy has had an effect on most of all the clients who are in the CalWORKs program. Clients from all professions, including ones with degrees and years of experience are having a very challenging time finding work. Many clients are unable to find work in professions they already had skills in, and in jobs that had numerous openings in the past.

Barriers to Gaining Employment

The main barrier to employment that came up among the participants was education and experience. Most of the participants stated that in today’s job market you need a good history in the field as well as education. Thirty percent of the participants stated that they were looking for office assistant work, but found without a typing certificate, or a ten key certificate they were unable to even get an interview for the position. One of the three looking for office assistant work stated not being bi-lingual was also a barrier she found to gaining employment. She stated many jobs she was looking for as an office assistant preferred a person who was bilingual.

One participant lacked a high school diploma and that was her largest barrier. She stated she could not get any type of interview without her diploma. Before the market was in a recession, she stated she could easily find temp jobs, retail work, or call center work without her diploma.

Other barriers that came up in the interviews were lack of transportation, background check issues, and lack of proper clothing to wear to interviews.
One 30 year old Caucasian female stated many barriers to finding employment, transportation is an issue, I have a bike but that only gets me so far. I am timed out, so I can’t get a bus pass and 100 dollars for me now is too expensive. I also don’t have the experience, I can type 40 words a minute but they want to see it on paper, I don’t have a certificate.

Surprisingly, no one mentioned childcare as a barrier to employment as found in the literature review. It appeared many of the barriers to employment stemmed from the current economy. The majority of the participants at one time had jobs and were able to find work easily. All of the participants had work experience, some had education and certificates. However, with the current market, gaining employment required much stricter requirements that the interviewees found they were lacking.

Returning to Assistance

Forty percent of the participants had never had a break from assistance. The longest period of time of consistently being on assistance among the participants was three years. Two of the four participants who had not had a break in aid, will be getting off of assistance soon due to gaining employment.

There were two themes that emerged among the participants who have had a break in assistance. One was, the participant was working and able to support themselves and family on their own. However, hours would get cut at their job or they lost their job all together, leaving them no choice but to go back on assistance to survive financially. A 31 year old Caucasian female stated,
I had a good job and was working 35 to 40 hours a week. I was making really good money and was able to support myself and children, but then the company downsized and I was let go. When that happened I had to go back on welfare.

The second was, the participants had to go back on assistance when the fathers of the children left the home. This was reported by thirty percent of the interviewees. The participants were on assistance and then reconciled their relationships with their children’s father. When they were with their children’s father, he would financially support the family. However, when the relationship ended, so did the financial support. This left the participants in need financially, and led them back to welfare. One 25 year old Hispanic female stated,

I was with my daughter’s father. He had a good job with a lot of hours, and was paid well. We were doing okay not struggling. Then he and I broke up, and I had to go back on welfare.

The overall themes that emerged in the interviews were the CalWORKs and Welfare to Work programs do not meet the needs of the participants. There are poor matches for the participants and the Welfare to Work activities that are assigned. The current economy is playing a huge role in being a barrier to employment, with education and job skill limitation also being important. All of the participants appeared motivated to get off of welfare and get to work; none of the participants were happy about being on assistance.
Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Qualitative interviews with ten workers at the Department of Human Assistance (DHA) and ten clients currently in the CalWORKs program were conducted with the goal of suggesting improvement for existing policies and the program. Throughout the process, it became clear that many inconsistencies exist between worker and client perceptions. Workers were interviewed from a variety of educational levels and experience at DHA—most of whom were Human Service Specialists. The clients were of a wide variety of ethnicities and backgrounds also. Initial questions asked during interviews were used to gather themes and perceptions about what was working well in the program and what could be improved.

It was found throughout the interviews that many discrepancies remain not only between staff and clients, but also among service providers regarding perceptions of the program. Additionally, the clients had very dissimilar views of the services being provided and what would assist them in independence from the program. In conclusion, the researchers hope to provide suggestions and rationale for how the program and delivery of services could better serve and engage clients. Beyond this, a look at the larger impact of policies and regulations will be discussed.

Workers felt that personal motivation on the part of the client would be the best predictor of success in the Welfare to Work program. However, in reviewing the
findings, it was the overwhelming perception of workers, ninety-percent, that a client’s motivation could not be influenced. Overwhelmingly, workers felt that motivation was a personal value of clients, and sanctions or penalties were the only sure way to get “unmotivated clients” engaged. There was also a belief among many workers that being “new to aid” was a main determinant in how successful a client would be in getting off of aid. Due to the current economy, increasing numbers of people who were previously employed are seeking assistance after being laid off of work. Therefore, many providers felt that these people, who were not of a generational welfare cycle, would be successful in gaining employment. Several workers talked about clients growing up on aid as a barrier stating they have adopted aid as a way of life.

Although historically rewarded, two parent homes were perceived by workers as having little to no benefit or connection with success in the program. Many women of low economic status were reported by workers as being domestic violence survivors or burdened by a male partner who chose not to work.

Contrary to the majority belief held by workers that sanctions are the most effective way to motivate clients, several clients had identified a desire to work. They wanted to provide for and be an example for their children. Participants expressed hope that the program would help them to gain skills and assist in job placement. Only two of the clients interviewed felt that sanctions increased their motivation to secure employment. There was only one client out of ten who did not identify a personal desire and strong motivation to get off of welfare.
Discrepancies of the Worker and Client Relationship

Surprisingly, only one out of ten workers interviewed stated that the relationship between the worker and client has some significance in predicting success of the client. This worker felt that if there was some quality of the relationship, and she held her clients accountable, they would have a better chance at success in the program. Three out of ten workers said that if clients were reporting their progress on job searching to someone, they would do better in the program.

However, many participants in the client interviewees stated that support from workers would be beneficial and make the trainings more effective. Three clients clearly identified that support, in the form of encouragement, cooperation and a caring attitude would help them to succeed in the program. One client said, “maybe so many people would not be on aid, if the workers were more supportive.” Additionally, it was found during interviews, many clients had little to no knowledge of program requirements or services. Through the client’s stories, it was found that incongruence between workers exists—some stress importance of Welfare to Work, others do not explain about it at all, and some fail to enroll clients who request it.

Services Gaps

Although many workers felt that clients lacked personal motivation, most identified it as a strength of their clients when asked about any client strengths. Workers seemed to agree that there is an issue of clients returning to aid after being off for a short amount of time. It would appear after further reflection that this may not be due to
client’s personal motivation or history of aid in the family, but rather the policies and regulations which inform the program. For example, a worker shared that a client on her caseload wanted to become a registered nurse. However, this was not part of the client’s Welfare to Work plan which meant she would have to take a sanction in order to pursue higher education. It seems clients who follow the program protocol, attend job club and CWEX would have only temporary or vocational job selections. The nature of this work is conducive to returning to aid. There are no incentives or even allowances by the program for pursuing higher education.

Beyond the perceived impact of generational welfare and personal motivation, ninety percent of workers identified life skills training as the most important gap in services. Although, most workers found at least some of the current referral options of the program helpful, life skills was a much requested option. Workers felt that it would highly benefit clients to be trained in the areas of budgeting, transportation, work skills, prioritizing, literacy and learning the value of money. One worker stated that English as a Second Language classes are needed, but it is not a core activity. Several workers mentioned that a personal coach for the client would be helpful, someone who teaches them skills for functioning long-term versus short-term gratification. One worker explained that social workers used to be able to help clients with life skills and physically show clients how to do things for themselves such as how to take the bus, open an account and utilize relevant resources in the community.
During client interviews, it was found that motivation and encouragement from workers helped to make a difference in the clients being able to gain employment or go to employment trainings. Most of the participants had a work history and were working hard to find work, but due to the economy and current job market were finding it difficult. The participants had all but a couple been involved in Sacramento County’s job club and CWEX programs. Clients found the ancillary services helpful, but there were a few that were found to be needed but were not offered.

Clients, although thankful for the necessary childcare services provided through the Welfare to Work program, were feeling stressed about delays of payments to providers and the loss of payment forms by the county. Clients explained that it was difficult to secure childcare for their children. Additionally, it was often a long wait for much needed transportation vouchers. Several clients indicated it took up to several months to receive a voucher. Clients discussed that the unreliability of the program due to worker inefficiency made it difficult to secure employment. Interestingly, clients also shared that they were hopeful program services offered by the Welfare to Work program would help in getting a job; however, several participants who had asked about enrollment in job club or CWEX were never enrolled, some did not know or understand what the different services were and others timed out before ever enrolling in such programs.

Three out of ten felt that on the job training or subsidized employment would be helpful if offered. Two major areas identified which would assist in job placement were
criminal record expungement and work clothes assistance. It becomes near impossible for a person with a criminal record to get a job, and having no money to apply for expungement becomes a large barrier for people who are living in poverty. Additionally, certain jobs require particular work attire, such as coveralls, which are not provided at the county’s clothes closet. Lastly, clients felt that if workers were supportive or helpful, they would have an easier time getting a job and gaining independence from aid.

Uniqueness of the Times

Historically, it is known that societies come together during economic depressions to help those who are subjected to poverty during that period. Social programs are created or revised to meet the current needs of citizens. Several key programs came out the economic depression in the 1920’s such as Social Security and jobs created to repair roads, create bridges and sustain the nation while waiting for the economy to improve. During the interviews for this study, perspectives were sought on the impact of the current economic recession in program functionality and value.

Six out of ten workers identified an impact of the current economic recession on client’s ability to secure or maintain employment, three said there was no impact, one did not know. A common theme emerging from the interviews of workers was that those who were newer to aid due to current job loss and recession are the “good clients” who would succeed in the program and get a job. Others felt that the current recession was just another excuse of those accustomed to aid in not seeking employment. One worker stated, “there are still low paying jobs out there.” This statement seems to highlight
another underlying theme that the expectation of the program is to get any job no matter how low the pay is even though many workers seem frustrated that people have to return to aid after a short time. It would then seem that perhaps it is not the clients who are concerned with immediate gratification, but that the program itself promotes living in the moment and has no suggestion for the long-term plans of people served. A worker talked about MediCal dental being cut and the impact on clients in finding a job with damaged teeth. Some workers felt that the clients without any formal education will now have a harder time due to a new crowd of educated competition after there have been drastic layoffs and cuts.

Ninety percent of clients interviewed felt that the economic recession is greatly impacting their search for employment. Most clients noted that jobs currently available now require specific certifications or education. Without any higher education or job experience, many clients described difficulties in getting a job which has been compounded by the competition in today’s market as many with education and experience are now also looking for any jobs.

Implications for Social Work Practice

Given the summary, there are many suggestions for the CalWORKs program at the Macro, Messo and Micro levels. There is a great need for policy changes at the Macro level, worker trainings and workshops at the Messo level, and an assortment of changes that workers could do in their work to make a difference to the lives of the clients’ they serve at the micro level.
Macro

At the macro level, Welfare Reform in 1996 was geared towards simply getting the client off of assistance and in to a job. The policies that helped to create the Welfare to Work plans at the County level, offer little assistance to long-term job stability and sustainability. The program offers job trainings in a variety of low skill level settings, and education is allowed but only at a vocational certificate level where the program has to end in a year or less. A client can not continue education past the year without working at least twenty hours per week. After the year of allowed education has ended, Sacramento County will not pay for childcare, transportation or ancillary services for more education. The county will only pay for these services for the hours the client is in a job. The county allows up to twelve hours for education to count towards the 32 hour per week work requirement, but will not assist in any ancillary services. Additionally, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes are not considered a “core” activity meaning the client still needs to work or be in a County job training program, difficult for a person who does not speak English.

With the current recession, the State of California has proposed more cuts to the Welfare to Work program. Since August of 2009, clients who have a child under the age of two, or two children under the age of six are exempt from the program altogether. This means no assistance beyond a monthly cash and food stamp grant is offered. These demographics are a large portion of the clients who have not timed out of the system. These clients can now not benefit from any Welfare to Work services. These new
exemption rules mirror old A.F.D.C. policies, where there was no assistance beyond a cash and food stamp grant. Making it appear that the welfare reform rules of 1996 are becoming a thing of the past.

In the researchers’ proposal, education will be the main component of Welfare to Work plans. The clients will be allowed to go to school, whether it be ESL classes, vocational training, or Associates or Bachelors degrees. The worker will track progress each semester to make sure the client is on the right track and making progress. If a client is not making progress, where a 2.0 grade point average is not being maintained, the client will be put on academic probation similar to when a person is receiving grants to attend college. When a student is on academic probation, they are at risk for their school grant being cut. If a client on CalWORKs is placed on academic probation they will risk being sanctioned.

The proposal for higher education being the main component to the Welfare to Work program will also include transportation and childcare for the clients to attend school. When the client finishes school and earns their degree or certificate they will then be placed in a county sponsored job search program to help in finding employment.

Also, the proposal will eliminate the new exemption policies that went in to effect in August of 2009. We cannot state that we have welfare reform, welfare to work services, and exempt the population who receives them.

A second proposal is to assist in criminal record expungement. This is a huge barrier to clients. The researchers propose that recipients with non-violent offenses be
helped to have their records expunged under the Welfare to Work plans offered. If a record is more than five years old, with no new infractions on the record the County will work with agencies on getting the record expunged. The client may be required to do community service in lieu of paying fines, but the record will be expunged. This plan will greatly assist clients in finding work, who could not before due to criminal records.

*Messo*

At the Messo level, there needs to be more County policies that track a workers progress with a client. There needs to be more consistency among workers. It does not serve the client to have a worker who simply does not do their job. It is unacceptable that a client would spend five years on assistance, time out, and not know what Welfare to Work is or what is required of them, what the benefits are, and what sort of ancillary services are offered. It is also unfair that the client exhausted their time and did not benefit, leaving the client more likely then not, stuck on welfare. This circumstance is at the fault of the agency who was supposed to assist in getting the client off of aid and living financially independent.

In this proposal, the Welfare to Work and eligibility components will be separated. Currently, a Human Services Specialist (HSS) manages all programs. This leaves Welfare to Work as secondary most times when the main concern is getting cash and food stamp benefits out to the client. In this proposed scenario, a worker will only do Welfare to Work and be required to make sure the client is in a Welfare to Work plan, meeting regulations and the plan is concise with that the clients needs are. With the
separation of the programs this will also allow a load reduction to workers, and help with stress levels. The literature review stated worker burnout leads to depersonalization. This theory helps to demonstrate what goes on with HSS workers. The depersonalization leads to workers enrolling all of their clients in to the same Welfare to Work activity, rather then assessing what each individual clients needs are. With the separation of the Welfare to Work component, supervisors will be required to review cases on a quarterly basis to assure that the workers are following guidelines. This will help in keeping workers on track and the assist in lessening the instances of clients falling through the cracks of the system.

A second Messo proposal is to have the County provide more worker trainings on burnout, client needs, resiliency and current trends. Currently, Sacramento County does not offer such programs. The researchers propose that on a yearly basis workers and supervisors be trained on stress reduction, time management skills, resiliency and new data found on what the trends are for current client needs. The current trends data would help workers in what to identify as needs when assessing the clients for their Welfare to Work plans.

**Micro**

At the Micro level, there needs to be more follow through with the workers. Workers need to enroll their clients in programs, track progress and issue entitled payments for transportation, books and childcare. Workers can not use their power negatively. The workers need to understand that their relationships with their clients can
greatly influence how well or how poorly a client is going to progress in their Welfare to Work plans, and in turn getting off of assistance.

The researchers believe more supervision, debriefing and multi-disciplinary team meetings would help to create a supportive and beneficial environment for the workers, leading to more positive outcomes for clients.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Sample Interview Guides

Interview Guide for Workers

1. What are the barriers you see that are keeping your clients from working?

2. How do you think the current economy has affected your clients in securing or maintaining employment?

3. What Welfare to Work activities are your clients currently in?

4. What DHA service referrals do you make most often? (VAC, mental health, AOD etc.)

5. What additional activities do you think are needed to help client become more job ready?

6. What do you find to be good motivators in getting clients engaged in Welfare to Work?

7. What has been your experience seeing clients cycle on and off of assistance? What do you think causes this?

8. In your experience, are two parent homes more successful in getting off of CalWORKs?

9. What strengths do you see in some of your clients?

10. What success stories have you known from this program? Tell me about an successful clients on your case load… Why do you feel it is/was a successful client? If there were none, why not?

Demographics of Workers

11. How long have you been working been working for DHA?

12. What is your education level?

13. What is your age?
Interview Guide for Clients

1. What kinds of jobs have you had in the past?

2. How have you utilized ancillary services offered though the Welfare to Work Program?

3. To what extent have you been involved in Sacramento County’s job club or CWEX program?
   How was the program helpful in gaining employment?

4. What other Welfare to Work services have you utilized outside of your CalWORKs worker?

5. What has motivated you to engage in Welfare to Work?

6. What other Welfare to Work services have you utilized outside of your CalWORKs worker?
7. How do you feel about the current economic crisis in relation to being able to gain employment?

8. What do you find to be barriers to gaining employment?

9. What has been your experience with being on assistance? Have you ever had a break from assistance? If so, what was going on in your life that led you back to the CalWORKS program?

Demographics of Clients

10. What is your current education level? Would you like to continue in school?

11. How many children do you have? How old were you when you had your first one?

12. Ages of children? Living with you?

13. What is your age?

14. What do you consider your ethnicity to be?
APPENDIX B

Sample Consent Forms

Sample Consent Form for Workers

Informed Consent for an Exploratory Study of the Experiences of Workers in the Cal Works Program.

Purpose and Benefits

A student in the Master’s of Social Work program at California State University, Sacramento, Kristin Plyler, will conduct interviews with workers to learn their experiences working with clients in the program. You’re consenting to an interview in order that we may learn about the strengths and needs of the Cal Works program. This study has been approved by, Deborah Burch, program manager at DHA.

Procedures

Ten workers will be interviewed by Kristin-selected on the basis on willingness to participate. All interviews will take approximately 45 minutes. The interview sessions will be recorded and all information will be kept anonymous in a locked drawer and destroyed once the data has been analyzed. Only I and the other researcher will review or have access to the information. We will not use your name when we report the results of this interview.

Risks and Benefits

There are minimal risks to being interviewed for this study. The interviews are being conducted to learn from you and your experience. The interviews will be used to analyze what has been effective about the program and how it could be improved. There are no monetary or otherwise tangible incentives for participation in this interview.

Rights as a Volunteer

Your participation in this interview is your choice. If you decide at any time you want to stop the interview you may, and none of the information will be used in the study. If you decide not to participate in this interview, there will be no consequence.

Community Resources

If you would like counseling as a result of this interview please contact one of the following resources: Sacramento Adult Access at 875-1055

Questions
If you have any questions about the interview, you may call the interviewer, Kristin Plyler (408) 858-4038, 
You may also contact Kristin’s project supervisor, Dr. Bein, via email at abein@csus.edu, 
or at (916) 278-6170

-----------------------------------------------              ----------------------------------------
Signature of Participant                                          Date
Sample Consent Form for Clients

Informed Consent for an Exploratory Study of the Experiences of Clients in the Cal Works Program.

**Purpose and Benefits**
A student in the Master’s of Social Work program at California State University, Sacramento, Christin Mealer, will be conducting interviews with clients in order to learn from clients their experiences in the Cal Works Program. You’re consenting to an interview in order that we may learn about the strengths and needs of the Cal Works program. This study has been approved by Deborah Burch, program manager at DHA.

**Procedures**
Ten clients will be interviewed by Christin from her case load or worker of the day duties. Christin will select the clients based on their willingness to participate in the program. All interviews will take approximately 45 minutes. The interview sessions will be recorded and all information will be kept anonymous in a locked drawer and destroyed once the data has been analyzed. Only I and the other researcher will review or have access to the information. We will not use your name when we report the results of this interview.

**Risks and Benefits**
There are minimal risks to being interviewed for this study. The interviews are being conducted to learn from you and your experience. The interviews will be used to analyze what has been effective about the program and how it could be improved. There are no monetary or otherwise tangible incentives for participation in this interview.

**Rights as a Volunteer**
Your participation in this interview is your choice. If you decide at any time you want to stop the interview you may, and none of the information will be used in the study. If you decide not to participate in this interview, you will not lose any service you are receiving or may receive in the future.

**Community Resources**
If you would like counseling as a result of this interview please contact one of the following resources: Sacramento Adult Access at 875-1055

**Questions**
If you have any questions about the interview, you may call Christin Mealer (916) 648-0856.
You may also contact Christin’s project supervisor Dr. Bein via email at abein@csus.edu, or at (916) 278-6170

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Signature of Participant                                      Date
APPENDIX C

Recruitment Flyer for Workers

Hello,

A student from California State University, Sacramento named Kristin Plyler will be conducting confidential interviews with CalWORKs workers.

Ten Workers are needed to be interviewed for the study.

These interviews will help provide perspective on what is working about the program and what could be improved.

If you are interested in participating please contact Kristin Plyler at (408) 858-4038

Thank you
REFERENCES


California Budget Project. (June 2009). The Governor’s proposal to eliminate CalWORKS would affect more than 1.4 million low-income children and parents. http://www.cbp.org


