



DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

ALAMEDA COUNTY
CALIFORNIA

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AGENDA ITEM NO. _____ September 28, 2010

September 1, 2010

Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Alameda
1221 Oak Street, Suite 536
Oakland, CA 94612-4305

Dear Board Members:

SUBJECT: Approve a Shared Services Call Center with the Alameda County Department of Child Support Services and the Sonoma County Department of Child Support Services

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Approve in principle a Shared Services Call Center with Sonoma County Department of Child Support Services and the Alameda County Department of Child Support Services; and
2. Authorize the Director of the Alameda County Department of Child Support Services to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Sonoma County Department of Child Support Services (Attachment I).

DISCUSSION/SUMMARY:

The Alameda County Department of Child Support Services currently provides a full service call center to its case participants. Calls from Alameda County case participants are routed from Sacramento through a Statewide telephone system to a team of Case Workers dedicated to call resolution. These Case Workers are focused on resolving all issues identified in a caller's case. While this method of processing calls has resulted in a high rate of issue resolution, several environmental changes have led to the need to change how the Department answers calls.

The Alameda County Department of Child Support Services has received flat funding from the State over the past five years. Without an increase in funding to keep pace with increased salary and service costs, the Department has had a reduction in staffing that is straining to support the volume of calls routed to the Department. In FY 2009/2010, there were 87,041 calls routed to Alameda County with 70,503 of the calls answered by call center staff. This means that 16,538 (19%) calls that were routed to Alameda County were abandoned by the caller before speaking

to a County representative. There were an additional 8,115 (8%) deflected calls that were not able to be routed to Alameda County because there were already too many phone calls waiting in the phone queue. The average wait time by callers was 5:00 minutes during this same period. These statistics, the change in staffing level, the recent change in the child support automation system, a new emphasis by the State on cost-effectiveness, and Alameda County efficiency efforts have all been driving factors in the department's plans to restructure its call center.

The Alameda County Department of Child Support Services plans to transition to a more general call center model. Analysis of local calls and statewide best practices have identified that 90% of the calls made to a local child support department are general information requests or updates that can be resolved with a cursory review of case records. The remaining 10% of the calls need the analysis and expertise of the Case Worker assigned to the case to meet the caller's needs. The general call center model will be staffed with Case Assistants to resolve the 90% of the general calls and will refer the 10% of the calls needing additional work to the Case Worker assigned to the caller's case. This will reduce the amount of time that staff is spending on each call and increase the volume of calls that can be processed. This plan will allow the Department to utilize a lower level of staff to answer the calls and transition the Case Worker staff to work on the more complex issues requiring analysis and follow-up. This will also give the case participant the opportunity to work with and build a relationship with their assigned Case Worker. The Department plans to transition to this model in December 2010.

This new call center model will bring about improved customer service for Alameda County case participants with better call answering service. The Department has set the following service targets for the general call center model:

- Average wait time = 3:00 minutes
- Rate of abandoned calls = 10%
- Annual number of deflected calls = 950 (1%)

Shared Services

In 2007/2008 the State converted all the counties to the Statewide Child Support System (CSE), a statewide automated case management system. At about the same time they also converted the county child support offices to a statewide telephone system. Since centralizing and standardizing the systems, the State has been looking for ways to become more cost-effective. One of the practices that the State has implemented is to allow counties with adequate infrastructure and resources to perform the general call center duties for counties with fewer resources. The State has been able to reduce the budget allocation of the county no longer responsible for performing the call center duties and increase the allocation of the County taking on the function. The State is calling this the "shared services" approach of answering calls. As a result, several Shared Services Call Centers have been formed:

- Butte County takes calls for Glenn, Colusa and Lake Counties;
- San Mateo County takes calls for San Benito/Santa Cruz and Marin Counties;
- Shasta County takes calls for Siskiyou/Modoc Counties;
- Ventura County takes calls for Santa Barbara County; and
- Orange County takes calls for Imperial and Solano Counties.

The State has recently identified other cost saving options for the call center function and is actively exploring which option to implement. One option is to regionalize the call center in the Central Valley, Northern, Central and Southern California regions. The second option is to centralize the call center function under State operations. The final option being considered by the State is to privatize the call center function with a vendor. All three of these options could lead to the reduction of funding to Alameda County Department of Child Support Services.

Alameda County Department of Child Support Services believes that because of our infrastructure, resources and program knowledge, we can be competitive and perform more efficiently and more cost effectively than a State or privatized call center. Alameda County has a robust infrastructure able to handle a regional call center.

In our leased facility we have space to accommodate the 100 to 150 additional staff needed to support a regional call center. We think it is important for local offices to retain control over child support calls and the information provided to callers. We believe that Alameda County Department of Child Support Services would be considered as an option for a regional call center site if the Department is able to show experience in the general and shared services call center models.

The first step in the Alameda County Department of Child Support Services' restructure plan is to enter into a shared services agreement with the Sonoma County Department of Child Support Services effective October 1, 2010. The call center model we wish to implement will route all of Sonoma County's incoming child support calls to the Alameda County Department of Child Support Services. The Alameda County Child Support call center will operate as a general call center and provide information to Sonoma County customers regarding general case status information and payments. Alameda County will update participant data in CSE such as addresses, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers, and will forward questions needing county-specific assistance to Sonoma County Child Support via the Statewide Computer System (CSE). This step will have no impact on the service level that is provided to the Alameda County case participants.

There are several benefits that the shared services agreement will bring to Alameda County which are:

- The Alameda County Department of Child Support Services will be able to use the lessons learned from the processing of Sonoma County's calls to prepare for the target

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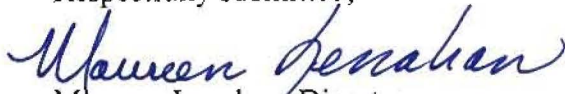
date of December 6, 2010 to transition the processing of Alameda County calls to a general call center model.

- The shared services agreement with Sonoma will initiate an agreement with the State that will include funding for approximately two additional FTEs in the Alameda County Department of Child Support Services.
- Alameda County's move to this shared services model will establish the County as a major player in the State's future plans for potential regionalization of child support calls. Alameda County would like to be one of the regional child support call centers which will allow us to retain control over our calls. It will bring child support call center jobs to Alameda County and protect our child support allocation from decreased funding by the State.
- This is an efficiency initiative that will reduce the cost of taking child support calls from \$26.66 per call to \$16.57 per call.

FINANCING:

The State Department of Child Support Services will transfer to the Alameda County Department of Child Support Services approximately \$133,144.00 in our annual State Allocation. This will fund approximately two FTE's of a Case Assistant position to facilitate the shared services call center agreement. No additional appropriations or positions are required at this time and there will be no net county costs. Alameda County Department of Child Support Services currently has two vacant Case Assistant positions.

Respectfully submitted,


Maureen Lenahan, Director
Department of Child Support Services

MKL/cdp

cc: Auditor's Office
County Counsel

Approval as to Form:
Richard E. Winnie, County Counsel

By:  _____

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN

THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA
DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

AND

THE COUNTY OF SONOMA
DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

To answer incoming County of Sonoma Department of Child Support Services phone calls at the County of Alameda Department of Child Support Services Call Center.

THIS AGREEMENT, entered into this 1st day of October, 2010, by and between the COUNTY OF ALAMEDA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES, AND hereinafter referred to as "AC/DCSS", and the COUNTY OF SONOMA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES hereinafter referred to as "SC/DCSS", for the purpose of answering SC/DCSS phone calls related to child support at the AC/DCSS Call Center.

A. Purpose

This Memorandum of Understanding between AC/DCSS and SC/DCSS is for the following:

B. Background

As of November 2008 all California counties have transitioned to the Child Support Enforcement system (CSE). This provides the unique opportunity for data sharing necessary for counties to share customer specific data. The new California Enterprise Customer Support System (ECSS) provided the ability to manage calls and route them as desired throughout local county child support offices statewide.

With the implementation of a CSE and ECSS, the option of shared services has become feasible, especially in the delivery of support services, such as a Child Support Call Center.

C. Responsibilities of AC/DCSS

AC/DCSS will answer calls from customers for SC/DCSS. Incoming calls being routed through ECSS will be answered by AC/DCSS's Call Center. AC/DCSS will provide general information

to customers, employers, title companies regarding general case status information, and payments; and will update participant data in CCSAS such as address, e-mail address, telephone number and will forward questions needing county specific assistance to SC/DCSS.

Questions identified for referral to SC/DCSS will be referred via a task on CSE.

This service will commence on a start date no earlier than October 1, 2010 but no later than November 1, 2010. The initial term will be one year from the start date.

D. Responsibilities of SC/DCSS

SC/DCSS will communicate to AC/DCSS their policy regarding their established timeframes for following up with the customer on those questions that cannot be answered by the AC/DCSS Call Center and need SC/DCSS follow-up. Also, SC/DCSS will identify their staff and communicate their e-mail addresses to AC/DCSS staff.

E. AC/DCSS and SC/DCSS Separate Entities

AC/DCSS and SC/DCSS shall remain separate and distinct programs operated within the respective counties.

F. Data Collection

AC/DCSS and SC/DCSS shall each keep data regarding processes that work well, those that need improvement, lessons learned, and suggestions for change for future "service sharing" agreements.

G. General Provisions

It is specifically and expressly understood that this agreement creates no relationship of employer/employee between Alameda County and Sonoma County and the AC/DCSS and SC/DCSS personnel.

The Directors of AC/DCSS and SC/DCSS agree to meet on a regular basis to discuss the status of this pilot, including problems, issues, concerns, standards, and goals.

SC/DCSS authorizes AC/DCSS to access CSE and all data within the system related to Sonoma County cases for the purpose of handling incoming customer calls.

AC/DCSS and SC/DCSS agree to enter "activity logs" into CSE for the purpose of exchanging information regarding the status of cases.

H. Terms of the Agreement

Both AC/DCSS and SC/DCSS agree that this Memorandum of Understanding may, upon mutual agreement of the parties, be renewed for successive periods of one (1) year each (each annual term, a "Renewal Term") after the expiration of the initial term and any subsequent renewal term unless canceled by either party at least sixty (60) days prior to the applicable term.

Notice of Termination of this Memorandum of Understanding, in whole or in part, shall be given in written notice to the other party specifying the effective date of such termination. Termination shall be effective on a date not less than thirty (30) days from notice.

I. Hold Harmless

1. SC/DCSS shall indemnify and hold harmless AC/DCSS from and against all actions which in any way arise out of, result from, or are connected in any way with SC/DCSS's negligent or intentional acts in performing services under this agreement, except any action which arises solely and exclusively out of the negligent or intentional acts of AC/DCSS.
2. AC/DCSS shall indemnify and hold harmless SC/DCSS from and against any and all actions which in any way arise out of, result from, or are connected in any way with the AC/DCSS's negligent or intentional acts in performing services under this agreement, except any action which arises solely and exclusively out of the negligent or intentional acts of SC/DCSS.
3. If an action arises out of the concurrent negligence of SC/DCSS and AC/DCSS, then liability for any damage in that action shall be apportioned between SC/DCSS and AC/DCSS in accordance with the California law of comparative negligence.

J. Insurance

Each party has and shall maintain during the term of this agreement the statutorily required insurance coverage for worker's compensation, and general commercial and automobile liability in an amount not less than \$2,000,000. Each party shall provide the other with certificates of self-insurance, insurance, or a combination thereof, or other documentation, which details the scope, limits, and forms of the party's insurance coverage. Each party agrees to provide the other with written notification of any changes in coverage applicable to this agreement and shall do so within thirty (30) days of the change or within ten (10) days in the event the change results in the termination of coverage(s) applicable to this agreement. In the event either party is unable to maintain insurance coverage(s) applicable to this agreement, the other party shall have the right to terminate this agreement.

K. Rate and Method of Payment

To answer SC/DCSS's calls, AC/DCSS will require additional funds to be allocated by the California Department of Child Support Services and services will continue as long as adequate funding is provided to AC/DCSS.

L. Non-discrimination

No person shall, on the grounds of race, color, religion, ancestry, gender, age (over 40), national origin, medical condition (cancer), physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical condition, marital status, or political affiliation be denied any benefits or subject to discrimination under this Agreement.

M. Changes

This Memorandum of Understanding can be changed by mutual agreement of both parties at any time during the term of the Memorandum of Understanding.

N. Addresses

All correspondence, notices, claims, etc. will be sent to the following persons and addresses:

County of Alameda
Department of Child Support Services
Deputy Director:

Matthew Brega
5669 Gibraltar Drive
Pleasanton, CA 94588
(925) 468-9023

County of Sonoma
Department of Child Support Services
Director:

Julie S. Paik
1755 Copperhill Parkway
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
(707) 565-4141

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto, by their duly authorized representatives, have affixed their hands on the day and year first above written.

Maureen Lenahan, Director
County of Alameda
Child Support Services

Julie S. Paik, Director
County of Sonoma
Child Support Services