

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION PROFILE

- **Background**

- California's social service system is state supervised, county administered. CDSS maintains central offices that oversee the administration of social service programs through local DSS offices in each of California's 58 counties.
- Many divisions within CDSS operate out of both the central CDSS office and regional offices located throughout the state. This puts CDSS staff in a position to be responsive to specific community culture and needs while still maintaining strong connections to the CDSS divisions/personnel at the central office that do not operate regionally. .
 - CDSS divisions include the Adult Programs Division, Family Engagement and Empowerment Division, Children and Family Services Division, Administration Division, Community Care Licensing Division, Disability Determination Division, Information Systems Division, State Hearings Division, Legal Division
- CDSS has also taken steps to introduce policy, regulations, and technology that support/facilitate County DSS operations. For example, CDSS is introducing a new Statewide Automated Welfare System.
- The County Welfare Director's Association (CWDA), an independent advocacy group representing the interests of County DSS leadership, helps to facilitate inter-county collaboration, coordination, and communication across the state and advocates on behalf of County DSS at the state level.
- Federal funding for social service programs is received through CDSS and is then matched by CDSS and County DSS. However, a percentage of sales tax associated with vehicle license fees are passed on to the counties by the state and this allotment is often used by counties to match state and federal funding for social service programs. This is considered guaranteed funding towards the administration of programs and services.

- **California DSS Regional Offices**

- The way each division chooses to engage with County DSS is individualize and varies depending on the divisions' associated programs and services.
 - Monitoring schedules and tools, location of support staff, and authority over County DSS operations all vary across divisions.
- Many CDSS divisions have staff that operates out of regional offices located across California in addition to staff that operates out of the central office.
 - The regional jurisdictions for each CDSS division do not necessarily overlap, meaning that County DSS may be grouped differently depending on the program/service they are receiving support/oversight for.
 - County DSS often maintain contacts in both the regional and central office locations to ensure that their service and program needs are being met.
 - The presence of regional CDSS offices has not been used to create a regional identity or encourage inter-county collaboration.
- Regional entities operated by CDSS do not administer direct client services unless County DSS contract back with them to assist in the administration of programs.
 - For example, small counties may not be able to accommodate certain mandated policies regarding the staffing of child and adult protective services cases (separation of duties). If this is the case, the County DSS may contract those services back to CDSS through a regional office.

- **The County Welfare Director's Association (CWDA)**
 - The County Welfare Director's Association (CWDA) is an organization that advocates on behalf of County DSS and helps to coordinate the provision of services across county lines.
 - In addition to representing the interests of County DSS in legislative and budgetary discussions, the CWDA has also taken on the primary responsibility of organizing County DSS, facilitating and encouraging inter-county communication and coordination, and enhancing the relationship between County DSS and CDSS personnel.
 - The CWDA has divided counties into regions and holds both state-wide and region-specific meetings for County DSS to attend. Regional meetings occur most frequently and can be the most responsive to changing community needs or resources.
 - The agendas for these meetings are county set, meaning the County DSS leadership decide what will be addressed and how often meetings will be held.
 - Director level meetings occur monthly and often involve presentations on budgetary considerations and changes to statute/authority.
 - Some meetings will be program specific and program directors/staff from the County DSS will be invited to attend.
 - These meetings also provide training opportunities.
 - Representatives from CDSS divisions may be invited to present on a topic or respond to County DSS feedback.
 - The CWDA also has sub-committees that may convene outside the normal schedule of meetings to address certain topics.
 - For example, the 20 smallest counties in California have their own sub-committee within the CWDA that meet regularly and specifically address the needs of small communities and the way they are impacted by social service policy or system change. Representatives from CDSS may interact with sub-committees directly to respond to needs.
 - The CWDA can function as "problem solvers" when conflict arises between CDSS and County DSS.
- **Additional Interview Insights**
 - The introduction of regional call centers does not necessarily reduce county staff work load. Certain communities will always prefer to seek out familiar, in-person assistance and will not make use of call centers. There is a perception that call centers are ineffective and will ultimately require follow-up at the county level. There may be a similar perception of regional offices that administer programs.
 - So many programs and services are closely inter-related that separating out some from county administration for regional administration may be challenging.
 - Designated funding passed from the CDSS to County DSS can eliminate disparity between County DSS.
 - There is an understanding between CDSS and County DSS that there will be no new mandated programs and services without accompanying funding.