



EFFECTS OF THE
RECESSION ON MEDI-CAL:
*Summary of Findings from
County Surveys & Eligibility
Worker Focus Groups*

Cathy Senderling-McDonald
CWDA Health Reform Symposium
July 14, 2011

OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION

- CWDA Work on Project
- Key Themes Identified in Survey, Focus Groups
- County Responses to Increased Caseloads
- Looking Forward to 2014



CWDA WORK ON PROJECT

- Project funded by The California Endowment
 - CWDA subcontracted to University of Cincinnati
- Survey of County Medi-Cal Managers
 - 48 of 58 counties responded
- Six Focus Groups with Eligibility Workers
 - Riverside
 - Sacramento
 - Los Angeles
- Surveys, focus groups conducted in 2010
- Write-up of findings and key themes



KEY THEMES IDENTIFIED

- Caseloads have increased
- Cases are more complex
- More families have multiple needs



CASELOADS INCREASED IN RECESSION

- Some noted an increase in Medi-Cal applications
- Even more noticed an increase in retention of existing cases
 - More timely completion of paperwork, renewal forms
 - When discontinued, families tend to come back in faster

“They understand that notice. Once you send it out, they say, ‘Hey!’ and call right away.”

- Los Angeles County Worker

“While we have not seen an increase in applications (the number is relatively flat), we've seen a growth in caseload and recipients. This leads us to believe that folks are staying on the program longer (reduced churn).”

- Large County Survey Respondent



CASES ARE MORE COMPLEX

- Many first-time applicants for assistance
 - Many with homes, cars, retirement savings, etc.
 - Many who had lost jobs, suffered reduction in hours, or had employers discontinue insurance to cut costs
- Can take longer to step these new applicants through the at-times invasive process
- When answer is “no,” clients sometimes express anger, confusion over this outcome

“It doesn’t make sense to them, because they don’t have a job. They have just completed this unbelievable amount of paperwork with very probing questions that are very stressful for them, and they find out that they aren’t really getting any help.”

- Sacramento County Worker



MANY FAMILIES HAVE MULTIPLE NEEDS

- Needs go beyond Medi-Cal – housing, SSI, etc.
- Cuts to other systems mean fewer staff to help there
- Puts county EWs in position of providing info and, at times, advocating on behalf of clients

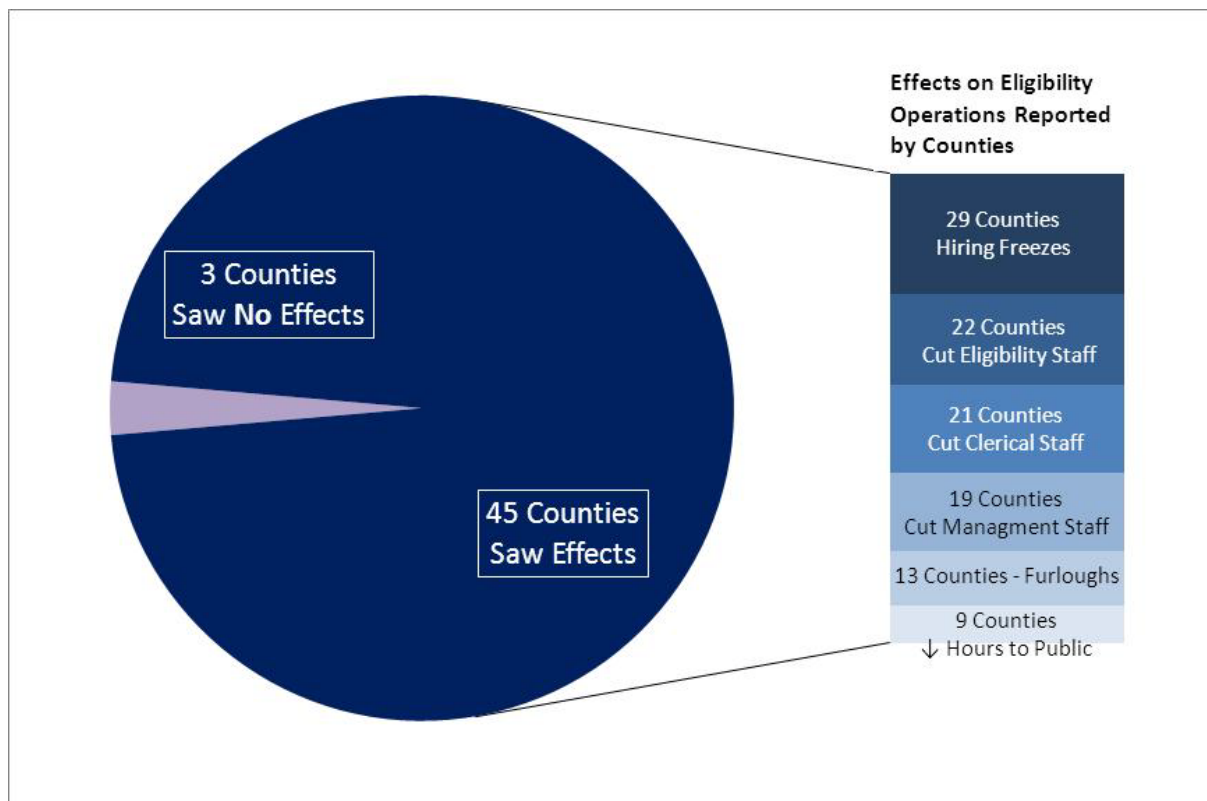
“They don’t know about Healthy Families. They don’t know about Medically Indigent Services Program. So that’s a little bit more time you spend with them explaining all of that.”

- Riverside County Worker



BUDGET CUTS AFFECTED MOST COUNTIES

- 45 of the 48 survey counties indicated that recent budget cuts and underfunding negatively affected their eligibility operations.



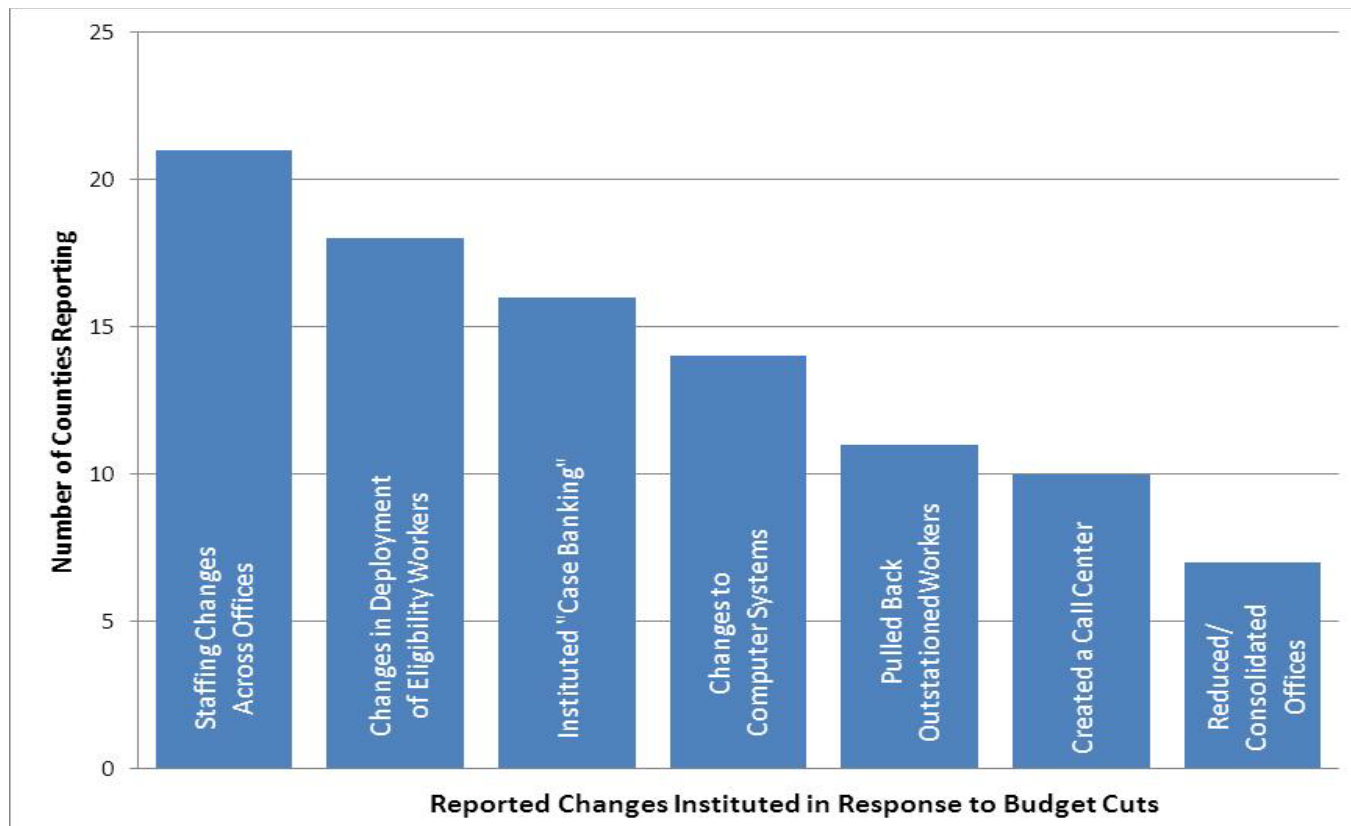
EFFECTS ON CUSTOMER SERVICE

- 39 of the counties indicated that these impacts had resulted in reduced customer service
 - For counties stating that customer service had diminished, 76.3 percent (29 counties) indicated that customer service had decreased about the same for both new clients and clients with existing cases.
 - Six counties, or 15.8 percent, indicated that customer service had decreased for new clients more than for existing clients.
 - The remaining 3 counties (7.9 percent) indicated that customer service had decreased most for existing clients.



COUNTY RESPONSES TO BUDGET CUTS

- Counties reported they had made various changes to work structure to accommodate cuts.



LOOKING FORWARD TO 2014

- All three focus groups expressed interest in the details of the federal law and how it would be implemented in California.
 - Hope that it would mean coverage for more families.
 - Many expressed desire for elimination of asset test and more consistent or less harsh treatment of certain assets like retirement savings.
- Eligibility workers in the focus groups stated that they would like to be able to sign families up for broader coverage in a simpler way, with a less complex application process.
- They also wanted to be a part of the implementation and to be kept informed.



QUESTIONS?

