STATE OF CALIFORNIA - HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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ADP BULLETIN

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Year 2000 (Y2K) Concerns

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PURPOSE

This bulletin is to inform counties and service providers regarding potential risks to alcohol and other drug services arising from Year 2000 (Y2K) technology problems, and the Department=s activities to address the risks and maintain continuity of services. It also suggests some actions agencies may want to take to prepare for Year 2000 concerns.

DISCUSSION

The Challenge. The Year 2000 compliance challenge is based on a problem spanning information technology throughout the world. The problem exists because it has long been a common practice in writing computer programs to use two digits instead of four to express the year when writing dates. An example is the use of A98" instead of A1998.≅ This practice was used to save expensive computer memory space and data entry time. As a result, computer software performing arithmetic operations, comparisons, or sorting of data fields could yield incorrect results when working with years beyond 1999. The year A00" could be read as the year 2000 or the year 1900.

This challenge impacts governments, businesses, institutions, and individuals using computers to accomplish their work. Any system or program could be affected if two digits are used to represent the year date.

In fact, the problem is not limited to what we typically call Acomputers≅ but to any device that has a microprocessor or microchip that uses a date function. Throughout our nation=s infrastructure, Aembedded chips≅ are used to manage transportation systems, power grids, water supply systems, security systems, manufacturing, telecommunications, and many more.

Making the change is fairly straightforward, but time-consuming. Every computer program or microchip that stores or references date data should be checked and changed if it affects your agency=s critical operations. Finding all the programs that use this date and coordinating, validating, and testing the change are what takes time. Just remediating an agency=s internal systems may not be enough, however.

What happens if the Year 2000 problem isn=t corrected? Any computer calculation that involves a date could result in errors. Some of the functions and activities that support AOD services in California that could be at risk of Year 2000 errors include:

- ability to transfer funds from the federal level through the state to counties and providers.
- ability to make prompt and accurate payments to providers.

  timely submission and processing of Medi-Cal claims.
- continued dispensing of methadone and other narcotic replacement drugs.
- disruption of electrical, gas, water, food, and other supplies to residential facilities and other service sites.

How likely are these risks to occur? No one really knows. Catastropic failures -- such as the failure of the entire western electrical power grid or malfunctioning of the telecommuncations infrastructure -- are considered *unlikely*. A more likely scenario would be a failure affecting a limited region of the state which could render an agency unable to deliver its services. Such failure could mean a business partner would be unable to deliver critical services, one or more buildings= heating or air conditioning system may malfunction, or a disruption of traffic signals may prohibit staff from reaching the workplace.

What ADP Is Doing. ADP continues to address Y2K readiness of our program applications that collect and process data from counties and providers, and all critical systems are expected to be in compliance in early 1999. Additionally, we are working with other agencies we do business with -- Department of Health Services, Health and Welfare Data Center, Health and Human Services Administration, and counties -- to assure that we can continue to share information and data as we move into the Year 2000. Other work is being done to identify embedded chips and systems affecting the habitability of the Department=s facility.

Additionally, in August 1998, ADP formed an internal Y2K Project Work Group to plan for the continuation of alcohol and other drug services and payments to counties and providers in the event of Year 2000 problems. For critical functions, actions are being taken to prevent or

mitigate the risk, if possible. A final step is the development of contingency plans for any instance where a Year 2000 problem actually occurs.

Finally, the Department is actively encouraging counties and providers of publicly funded alcohol and other drug services to assess their own Year 2000 risks. Presentations to groups of county representatives, providers, program executives, and contractors continue to be made, and the Department stands ready to offer presentations and information to counties and providers relating to Year 2000 concerns.

Year 2000 Readiness. How to prepare for Year 2000 problems varies from agency to agency and area to area. Each agency must identify and assess the areas where their business operations may be vulnerable. The following is by no means exhaustive, but some risk areas where agencies should direct their attention include:

Desktop computers/computer applications: Check the Y2K compliance of your computer software. The best source for this information is the vendor that produced the product. Many vendors have this information on their web sites.

Business partners: Ask the entities you do electronic business with -- banks, other agencies, government, etc. -- if their systems are Y2K compliant or when they expect them to be.

Microchips: Check systems that operate your facilities -- security systems, elevators, communications, heating and cooling, dispensing, etc. Less important, but possibly still troublesome, are office equipment and business machines such as FAXes, phones, timers, meters, etc.

Infrastructure: Consider the extent to which Year 2000 disruptions could affect the ability of your agency to deliver essential services: loss of electric power, loss of telecommunciations service, loss of public transportation (affecting employees= commute to work), loss of functional database, loss of internet service, loss of mail service, and loss of banking services.

Continuity planning: Plan for the continued operation of your critical business functions in
the event of any of these potential Year 2000 failures. This is the most important step, not only if you are unable to ascertain Y2K compliance but also if systems are reported to be ready. Plans should cover the agency=s planned response to potential disruptions. It may be helpful to have a planned response for each of these potential losses for two time frames: loss for a few days, and loss for a couple of weeks. Even though the likelihood of failure may be low, planning is important so the reaction (if required) is pre-arranged.

With proper planning and action, and working together, we can continue to deliver important alcohol and other drug services in California into the new millenium and beyond.

QUESTIONS/MAINTENANCE

Questions or comments regarding this document may be directed to Peggy Blair, Y2K Project Manager, Information Management Services Division, at (916) 322-1222.

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