



# The SACHS CHRONICLE

Vol. VI, Winter 2004

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**FACILITATING AGENCY:  
THE ACADEMY FOR  
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## SACHS Retreat Dates 2004

Date: February 19-20, 2004  
Location: Embassy Suites, Santa Ana  
Guest: Stan Rosenstein, CDHS  
Topic: Budget  
Special Audience: Financial Staff



Date: May 20-21, 2004  
Location: Lake Arrowhead (tentative)  
Topic: IHSS Caseload Growth / Budget  
Special Audience: Aging/Adult Services Staff

Date: August 19-20, 2004  
Location: Embassy Suites, Santa Ana  
Guest: Will Lightbourne (tentative)  
Topic: Critical Issues on the Horizon  
Special Audience: Executive Level Staff

Date: December 2-3, 2004\*  
Location: Embassy Suites, Santa Ana  
Topic: Political Advocacy  
Special Audience: Legislative Staff

*\*Note: rescheduled from 11/18-11/19 due to  
conflict with CWDA meeting.*

### Inside this issue:

SACHS Retreat Dates 2004	1
Highlights from GAO Study	2
Report Released: "Innovative Approaches to Managing with Less"	3
Farewell to Dr. Rodger Lum	3



**NOTE: SACHS Directors  
are encouraged to invite  
a their Fiscal department  
heads to attend the  
discussion on Budget  
that will take place at the  
February SACHS Meet-  
ing, on the afternoon of  
Thursday, February 19th.**

# Highlights from GAO Report: CHILD WELFARE States Face Challenges in Developing Information Systems and Reporting Reliable Child Welfare Data (Nov. 2003)

The following is a selected list of highlights included in the GAO's report. To download the full report, visit:

[www.gao.gov/highlights/d04267thigh.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d04267thigh.pdf)

## The aims of the study were to address:

1. States' experiences in developing child welfare information systems and the Health and Human Services (HHS) role in assisting in their development;
2. Factors that affect the reliability of data that states collect and report on children served by their child welfare agencies and HHS's role in ensuring the reliability of those data;
3. Practices that child welfare agencies use to overcome challenges associated with SACWIS development and data reliability.

## Methods:

- ◆ Surveys: All 50 states were surveyed regarding their experiences developing and using information systems and their ability to report data to HHS.
- ◆ Review of HHS documents and relevant literature;
- ◆ Interviews with HHS officials and child welfare and data experts.

## Key Findings:

47 states are developing or operating a SACWIS, but many states continue to face challenges developing their systems.

*“Reliable data are essential to the federal government’s development of policies that address the needs of the children served by the state child welfare agencies.”*

If you are interested in receiving a copy of any of the complete articles summarized in this newsletter, please contact

Jennifer Tucker-Tatlow  
[jtatlow@projects.sdsu.edu](mailto:jtatlow@projects.sdsu.edu)

## Approaches to help caseworkers identify and better understand the data elements that are required for federal reporting:

- ◆ Add Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS) component to initial and ongoing training about SACWIS (purpose of collecting info; data entry guidelines, etc.)
- ◆ Incorporate features that encourage workers to enter the information (color-coded fields; alerts, “ticklers,” icons to indicate tasks overdue, etc.)
- ◆ Use data in published reports that hold caseworkers and supervisors accountable for the outcomes of the children in their care
- ◆ Frequent review of data, followed by immediate feedback to caseworkers and supervisors regarding needed corrections and data entry improvements

HHS recognizes that the data definitions need to be updated and revised and is in the process of revising regulations.

United States General Accounting Office. (November 2003). Child welfare: States face challenges in developing information systems and reporting reliable child welfare data.



James Semmes (SACHS Chair) led the group through a rather ambitious agenda. Discussion centered around AB 636 and the Child Welfare Services Redesign. Don Dudley and Linda Walker (Academy’s Director and Associate Director respectively) are also pictured.

# Report Released: “Innovative Approaches to Managing with Less”

The final report culminating from SACHS Year 2 research project was released in December 2003. The report presents over 140 strategies for managing cutbacks at both the program and executive levels, including:

## Executive Level Strategies:

- ◆ Advocating for/representing agency’s needs
- ◆ Making decisions as to how cuts would be allocated
- ◆ Financial strategies used to minimize the impact of cuts
- ◆ Building both staff and community support
- ◆ Moderating the impacts of the cuts on staff and clients

## Program Level Strategies:

- ◆ Modifying levels and types of services to clients
- ◆ Developing alternative resources/revenues to replace or offset reductions
- ◆ Increasing productivity of staff, doing more with less
- ◆ Shifting/sharing responsibility to

*The people who are closest to the client come up with the best ideas.*

— Statement made by a program level study respondent.

The following are examples of the types of strategies that are documented in the research report:

**Community decision-making, consensus process:** Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services’ (DPSS) leadership arranged a series of meetings with their own staffs and community stakeholders to develop ideas for responding to the cuts. Sharing both program and fiscal information, and involving representatives from each of these areas, seemed particularly useful.

**Employee Option Meetings:** In San Bernardino County, Employee Option Meetings (EOM) were held to assist staff in application, resume writing, understanding employee options (how list placement and re-qualification works), and to provide information about upcoming job fairs within and outside of the county.

**Inclusive organizational culture and SWOT analysis:** In Ventura County, after an agency and departmental diagnosis was completed agency managers conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis to prioritize issues and set goals.

Full report and appendices are available online on SACHS’ web page at: <http://pcwta.sdsu.edu/sachs.html>



Carol Anselmi (San Bernardino County) and Kathy Gallagher (Santa Barbara County)

## Farewell to Dr. Rodger Lum

*Dr. Lum was an integral part of SACHS since it’s inception. His enthusiasm, creativity, and engaging dialogue helped develop the organization’s structure and function. Rodger was always quick to add an innovative thought or pose a thought-provoking question. So it was with great sadness that we received the news of his resignation in late November.*

*Both in his roles as vice-chair and then as chair of SACHS, Rodger was conscientious and very committed to enhancing our partnership. He believed deeply in SACHS and its capacity for growth. We all benefited greatly from the wisdom he shared, gathered from his extensive background in the area of health and human services.*



*Rodger contributed innovative ideas in such areas as executive development, “Network of Care” for Aging and Adult Services, and performance-based contracting. Further, he was committed to identifying those common issues faced by SACHS counties that were conducive to regional problem solving and strategizing.*

*Please join us in wishing Rodger all the best as he engages in new and challenging opportunities. We will always remember his wonderful energy and dedication and welcome him as a colleague on SACHS projects in the future.*