Philadelphia County Assistance Office (PCAO) Client Survey Project

Mayor's Internship Program | Summer 2016

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Executive Summary

During the Mayor's Internship Program (MIP), a group of nine interns worked throughout the month of July to collect survey data for the Mayor's Office of Community Empowerment & Opportunity (CEO). This research project was created to understand why people have difficulty maintaining public benefits. This problem - often referred to as "churn" - occurs when people who are eligible for benefits lose access to them for various reasons, and then re-apply for these same benefits after a short period of time[1]. Often people experience a short period without benefits, which can cause them to experience hardship.

We elicited this information by conducting over 700 face-to-face interviews at county assistance offices throughout the city. The primary goals of our research were to collect information about people's experiences receiving SNAP, TANF and Medicaid and then make recommendations about ways to help eligible Philadelphians remain connected to their benefits.

Background

The Philadelphia County Assistance Office (PCAO) Client Survey Project was developed in partnership with the Benefits Access Working Group (BAWG),[2] which is one of five committees convened by CEO to support the Shared Prosperity Philadelphia anti-poverty plan. In February 2016, working group members met with officials from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS), the state agency that manages PCAO offices among offices in every other PA county, to discuss options for accessing administrative data and exploring special projects that the BAWG could pursue to learn more about the reasons people get involuntarily disconnected from benefits.

[1] Rosenbaum, Dottie. "Lessons Churned." Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (2015).
[2] See Appendix IV.

The PCAO Client Survey Project originated from these discussions and is designed to collect evidence on the incidence and causes of unanticipated termination of benefits from the perspective of recipients. The BAWG will review the results from the survey project and use the findings to determine next steps in advancing the goal of helping eligible clients remain connected to their benefits.

Survey Methods

Over a four-week period (July 1-July 29), our team surveyed 711 people at five County Assistance Offices in the city. We conducted the survey in an interview format from Tuesday to Friday within those weeks, along with legal interns from Community Legal Services. All interviews were conducted privately and no identifying information was taken. This survey instrument was created by CEO with our group's input. We received two in-depth trainings from CEO about surveying best practices and were also instructed how to accurately record, code and input data.

Results

From the data, we discovered that 35% who have previously applied for benefits have likely experienced churn in the last six months. The findings point to three specific reasons that this might occur:

- 55% of clients report not receiving renewal forms.
- 40% of clients on SNAP report not receiving a notice that they had to interview (required for the continued receipt of benefits).
- 31% of clients on TANF report not receiving a notice of their scheduled interview (required for the continued receipt of benefits).

Background

The public benefits offered to, accessed by, and retained for Americans have been shaped by a lively history of frequently changing programs and attitudes. Today, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services serves 2.8 million clients in the state[3]. Caseworkers have many, many cases to process and limited resources with which to do so[4]. Relative to residents of other counties in Pennsylvania, Philadelphians have a tremendous need for public benefits programs. There are thirteen PCAO locations in Philadelphia, at least ten more than every other PA county besides Allegheny (which has nine and contains Pittsburgh)[5].

Our team spent a month surveying PCAO clients in five DHS offices throughout Philadelphia. We found that many clients were in the office because they were no longer receiving food stamps (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP), medical assistance (Medicaid), and/or cash assistance (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, TANF), yet they remained eligible to participate in these programs. These clients are victims of "benefits churn," when eligible families that have been receiving public benefits lose them only to reapply for benefits within a short period of time[6]. Since SNAP, Medicaid and TANF are each administered differently, each program has a unique history, renewal process, and therefore "type" of churn.

A history of welfare programs in the United States

Examining this history gives insight into today's challenges. Though "welfare" in the United States started with cash payouts to the widows of deceased Civil War soldiers[7], most

[3] "DHS Budget Request for FY 2016-2017." PA Department of Human Services (2015): 30-35. PA Department of Human Services.
[4] Levine, Judith Adrienne. "Ain't No Trust." University of California, 2013.
[5] "County Assistance Office Contact Information." PA Department of Human Services.
[6] Rosenbaum, Dottie. 2015.
[7] Levine. 2013.

large-scale public benefits programs in the US began with the New Deal, a federal response to the Great Depression where Americans were experiencing financial hardships unlike that of any other period. The program often known as "welfare" was called Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and started primarily as indefinite cash assistance to white, non-working, single mothers. Eligibility and amount were determined by a caseworker, and black mothers who had always been in the labor force were deemed not eligible. In response to the 1960s civil rights movement, welfare entitlements expanded to include black women. This would alter the composition of AFDC recipients, and generate racialized resentment towards the program and concern over its incentives over time[8].

This resentment helped spur the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWOWA), which renamed AFDC to TANF and placed several limits, restrictions, and work/job training requirements on SNAP and TANF recipients. Since the widespread inclusion of white women into the US workplace during the 1970s on, work-related requirements and expectations previously reserved for men now reached mothers as well[9]. AFDC lost its entitlement status (where eligible candidates would always receive cash assistance) when it transitioned to TANF. States, which administer public benefits, now receive a certain amount of federal funding for TANF. If there is a greater need than the federal funding provided in a given state in a given year, then some candidates in that state will not receive cash assistance[10]. The stringent nature of today's modified "welfare" programs creates the perfect conditions for benefits churn to harm DHS offices and recipients alike.

[8] Levine. 2013.
[9] Levine. 2013.
[10] Rosenbaum. 2015.

Process of Renewal and Churn

For each public benefits program, churn becomes an issue during the renewal process. Either biannually or annually, public benefit programs reassess families' eligibility to direct limited budget resources to families that need assistance the most. This reassessment, called renewal, involves interactions between state agencies and families - opportunities for procedural issues that create churn[11]. Renewal for each benefits program is administered differently, so clients may have to complete multiple, separate renewals each year (see Figure I on the next page). Recipients are required to verify their financial status, residency, health and criminal histories, etc. by providing various documents and completing a renewal form. Ideally, DHS staff will send recipients the renewal form over the mail - then the client will submit the documents by mail or in person[12].

Figure I[13]

SNAP	TANF	Medicaid
Renews every six months	Renews every 12 months	Renews every 12 months[14]
Requires in-person interview with a DHS caseworker every 12 months	Requires an in-person interview with a caseworker every 12 months	Does not require an interview

If eligible clients fail to receive renewal forms in the mail, submit renewal paperwork, or complete interviews, then the client will have their benefits terminated. The process of

[11] Rosenbaum. 2015.
[12] "Interview of Graham O'Neill." Personal interview. 29 July 2016.
[13] Rosenbaum. 2015.
[14] Sometimes caseworker can verify status using records on file. In this case the client does not have to submit a renewal form.

reapplying for benefits shortly after having a case terminated is estimated to cost the PA DHS and Philadelphians about $9 million every year. When clients experience churn, they have to complete an entirely new application which costs the PA DHS double or triple the cost of processing a renewal application[15]. Most importantly, clients experience serious hardship when they are no longer receiving benefits that they need.

The "Trust Gap"

Dr. Judith Levine, a professor at Temple University, wrote a book called *Ain't No Trust,* which describes how low-income mothers – often recipients of AFDC and now TANF – tend to distrust many people within the "welfare" system (as well their boyfriends and bosses). Levine posits that distrust occurs when 1) the other's interests in the interaction opposes his/her own and 2) he/she doesn't feel he/she has the power to demand fair treatment from the other[16]. Since the passage of PRWOWA and the Great Recession, caseworkers have exorbitant caseloads to process and are not incentivized to take measures that could help people stay connected to benefits[17].

Distrust between clients and caseworkers can lead to misunderstandings in the renewal process and limit communication between recipients and caseworkers, contributing to lapses with required submissions or follow through[18]. Clients do not eagerly reach out to DHS offices for help, so they remain unsure of the renewal process timeline and requirements. A client of Community Legal Services (CLS) shared her own experience with us. We will call this client, who asked to remain anonymous, Jane. Jane compared making a phone call to the assistance

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[15] "Churn Hurts Clients, DHS Caseloads, and Pennsylvania's Economy," Center for Law and Social Policy, January 2015.
[16] Levine, Judith. "PCAO Survey Interview." Personal interview. 9 Aug. 2016.
[17] Levine. 2016.
[18] Rosenbaum. 2015.

office to “falling into a black hole.” She reported that she has never received a call back after leaving a message[19].

When people have their benefits unexpectedly terminated, it can exacerbate trust between its victims, caseworkers and recipients, closing further lines of communication that could have cleared up misunderstandings or made processes easier[20]. Many of the clients we surveyed were, like Jane, in the office because they assumed that their issue would not be addressed unless he/she was in-person, directly observing the caseworker addressing his/her issue. A “trust gap” can be observed from our survey responses and their aggregate statistics described below.

Results

After our surveying period finished, we coded our results and ran statistical analyses using the program IBM SPSS Statistics 24.[21] Relevant analyses include frequencies, descriptive statistics, crosstabs, and correlations. These analyses form the basis of our results.

We surveyed clients at five County Assistance Offices (CAOs) across the City of Philadelphia. We did not collect identifying information, but we can reasonably assume that the clients surveyed are low-income individuals with a wide range of racial and ethnic backgrounds. In the data that we did collect, approximately 35 percent of survey respondents experienced an income change within the past six months, and 28.65% of our respondents had a change of address within the last six months. It should be noted that the survey captures clients' perceptions of DHS actions and may not correspond directly with results obtained from administrative data.

[19] Interview with “Jane,” a benefits recipient from Community Legal Services." Telephone interview. 8 Aug. 2016.
[20] Levine. 2016.
[21] The survey and related code book can be found in Appendices II and III.

Our sample is biased towards clients who apply in person rather than online or through the mail; however, surveyors collected data on multiple days throughout four weeks from any client willing to participate. As such, this sample of clients represents the larger Philadelphian population that seeks to apply for benefits in person. Due to the breadth of responses (a total of 711) our white paper can help illustrate the gravity of the problems for these individuals. Furthermore, these results illuminate the need for additional research using administrative data from DHS to confirm the extent of these issues.

In total, we found that 60.32% of clients surveyed claim to experience their benefits being cut off. There are multiple reasons that someone may experience a stoppage. For example, a monetary raise could result in someone disqualifying for benefits even if they are still experiencing hardships. Ninety-five people, or approximately one-third of respondents who had not lost their benefits, were in the process of applying for benefits for the first time. Excluding these 95 clients, a total of 69.9% of clients indicated that they had lost their benefits at some point in time. Of those who had experienced their benefits being cut off, 66.9%, or 267 individuals, reportedly experienced this stoppage in the last six months. Such a high proportion of clients reporting losing benefits within the last six months suggests that cut-offs are frequent. Although our specific focus was churn, the loss of benefits at such high levels is concerning, especially in light of evidence that the benefits cut-offs are recurring. While this survey cannot speculate as to why people report losing their benefits so frequently, we can easily tell this high turnover rate must put an enormous weight on staff at CAO who must constantly close and reopen benefit cases. Both this aspect of recurrence and the overall high rate of losing benefits could indicate underlying issues related to policy or the renewal process.

Isolating churn *per se* from these surveys was more difficult than simply reported loss of benefits. Some proposed measures in a report by the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities all involved determining a proportion of cases that reopened "within 90 days" of being formally closed.[22] In our analyses, we used four criteria to isolate which clients had experienced churn in the last six months: 1) the client's benefits were stopped, 2) the client reapplied within four months of benefits stopping, 3) the client's application was approved, and 4) this entire process happened within the past six months. Under this criteria, we found that at least 90 respondents had experienced churn in the last six months. These 90 clients represent 12.66% of our total respondents, and 14.61% of respondents who had applied for benefits before (i.e. those who were not applying for the first time on the date surveyed). While these numbers provide an estimate of definite rates of reported churn within the last six months, they exclude those cases in which the approval notice has not been received, but which conform to all other criteria.

Many of the respondents surveyed were at a CAO in order to complete the process of reapplying for their benefits. We thought of these clients as "likely churners."[23] While we cannot definitively prove they will complete the churn cycle by being accepted, we can reasonably estimate that most people will be accepted. We can predict this result based on the fact that clients who already had applied saw a 97% acceptance rate in our survey, but also anecdotally as clients did not appear concerned about having their application accepted, but had other concerns such as the wait time required to speak to a caseworker. Our inability to precisely identify whether *likely churners* will be accepted demonstrates further the need to continue this project. Adding "likely churners" to our pool of "definite churners" results in a total of 216 respondents

[22] Rosenbaum. 2015

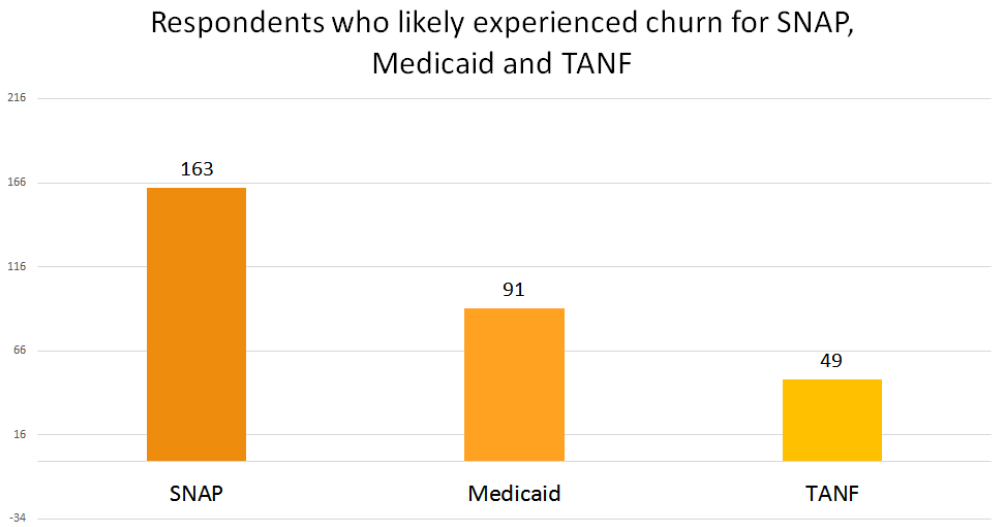
[23] Throughout this section, we will refer to measurements that use both "likely churners" and "definite churners" as *churn-likely*, and measurements that use only "definite churners" as *churn-definite*.

who have reported experiencing churn in the last six months, which is 30.38% of our total respondents and 35.06% of respondents who had applied before.

These figures indicate that churn is a problem of a much larger scope than our most conservative definition suggests. Furthermore, an additional 73 respondents had experienced churn as defined by our first three criteria, but not in the last six months. All of these rates point to a high incidence of churn, and show that churn is a serious issue in Philadelphia. Clearly, CAOs would benefit from identifying why churn is reportedly happening so they can implement policies to help address benefits retention.

We next examined the spread of churn across different types of benefits. Of *churn-definite* respondents, 83.33% were reapplying for lost SNAP benefits, 36.67% were reapplying for lost Medicaid, and 35.56% were reapplying for lost TANF benefits. Of *churn-likely* respondents, 79.17% were reapplying for lost SNAP benefits, 40.93% were reapplying for lost Medicaid, and 29.77% were reapplying for lost TANF. (See Graph I below for number of *churn-likely* respondents for each type of benefit). The high proportion of respondents receiving SNAP benefits likely contributes to the high proportion of people who lost this benefit. Thus, the lesson to be gained from this analysis is not that one benefit or another is most closely associated with churn. Rather, one should note that these percentages add to far more than 100% (155.56% for *churn-definite* and 149.87% for *churn-likely*), which indicates that substantial proportions of churners experienced churn for more than one benefit. The loss of multiple benefits is yet another troubling piece of evidence of the far reaching consequences of churn.

Graph I



Furthermore, churn also deserves serious consideration because of the negative impact that it has on client's lives. In our survey, we allowed clients to review a list of hardships (e.g. missing a meal, unable to pay rent) and note which ones they had experienced. As surveyors, we believe that many clients declined to indicate hardships that they had, in fact, experienced due to a lack of privacy or comfort with the interviewer. Despite this under-reporting, 67.51% of respondents reported experiencing at least one hardship listed on the survey within the last six months. There is a positive correlation between the experience of benefits being cut off and the number of hardships encountered (i.e. sum of hardships; $r(N = 687) = .078$, $p<0.05$). Clients who have had their benefits stopped are more likely to have experienced multiple hardships than those who had not experienced a cut-off. While it is beyond the statistical scope of our survey to prove that losing benefits *leads to* hardships, it is certainly clear that staying on public benefits would improve the quality of life of many of our respondents.

From the high incidence of benefits loss either generally or due to churn specifically, to the overlap of churn for multiple benefits, to the associations between churn and hardships, it appears that churn is a substantial problem for public benefits clients in Philadelphia. Understanding the gravity of churn, it is imperative that government find ways to reduce its

incidence and ensure that clients are able to stay connected to benefits. With this critical mandate in mind, we also examined several aspects of the renewal process to narrow down problems that may have resulted in churn for *churn-definite* and *churn-likely* respondents. Our survey attempted to determine potential factors resulting in churn, but due to limitations in the data, we strongly recommend future research utilizing administrative data to pinpoint why clients are experiencing trouble staying on their benefits. Nevertheless, it is worth considering a few key findings from our look at the renewal process.

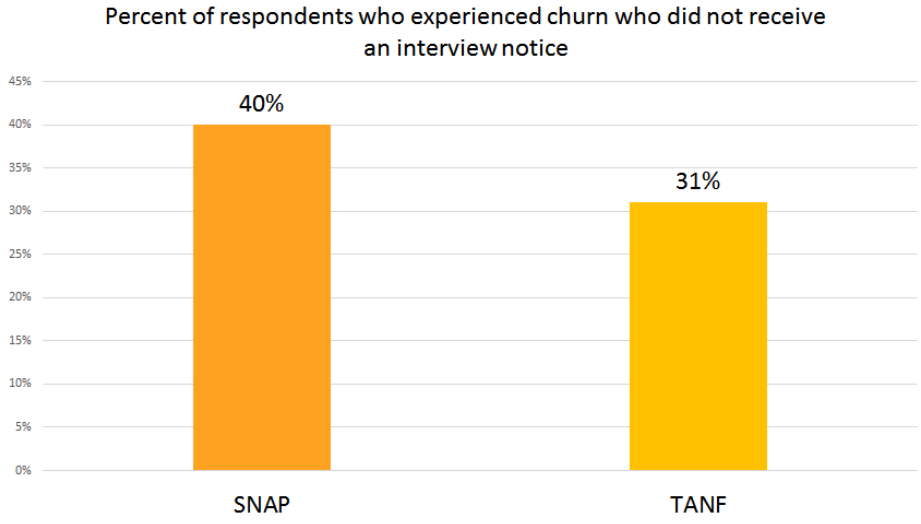
From those we surveyed, 44.94% of *churn-definite* respondents and 55.19% of *churn-likely* respondents reported that they never received a renewal form. Of those who did receive a form, some clients may have come to their local CAO to pick up a renewal form, lessening the likelihood that any given client would receive a renewal form in the mail, as is protocol. While there are multiple reasons that someone may not receive their renewal form in the mail, there was no correlation between address change and receiving the renewal form. In other words, it does not appear that a change of address is resulting in the reported absence of a renewal form for most clients. Regardless of reason, not receiving a renewal form means that clients may not realize that they are facing an upcoming deadline (an issue in and of itself even when clients do receive the form), leading to a loss of benefits. The magnitude of clients who reported they did not receive renewal forms suggests that this simple, initial step was a major issue in the renewal process that could contribute substantially towards churn. With identifying information, we could help determine exactly when the renewal form was sent and potential reasons someone may have not gotten the form within thirty days of their renewal deadline.

Clients are also expected to submit documentation, such as paystubs or proof of residence, along with the renewal form. More research is needed to understand the issues in this

phase that may contribute towards churn. With not enough responses in the documentation section of the survey, we could not determine the relationship between types of documentation required and if that impacted submitting the paperwork at all or by the deadline. Future research should collect more information to help determine if certain paperwork is leading to churn.

Excluding Medicaid, if the renewal form and documentation are submitted and approved, clients who are renewing SNAP and TANF are required to complete an interview. Again, clients reported that the major problem was receiving notice of this interview. Under SNAP, 37.84% of *churn-definite* interviewees and 40.00% of *churn-likely* interviewees claim they did not receive an interview notice. Under TANF, there were not enough *churn-definite* interviewees to draw conclusions, but 30.56% of *churn-likely* interviewees report they did not receive an interview notice. (See Graph II below for a comparison of SNAP and TANF using *churn-likely* rates.) The high rate of churners who did not receive interview notices means that this may be another major point at which clients lose their benefits. Beyond this point, barriers to conducting the interview could present further issues, which would require further research to confirm.

Graph II



While further research is certainly needed, it is clear that churn is a major cause for concern in Philadelphia. Furthermore, it seems that special attention must be placed on issues surrounding the renewal form and interview notices, as high rates of problems were reported in these areas. Major steps must be taken to improve these aspects of the renewal process so that key issues do not cause clients to lose their benefits.

Limitations

No matter how thorough a project like this may seem, it is important to remember and recognize the imperfections: intentional and accidental, large and small. Ultimately, these limitations are a necessary part of fully comprehending and contextualizing this project and its results.

Project Limitations

Several limitations were simply a product of the survey's intentional design. These limitations were purposeful omissions motivated by the scope of our project. Nevertheless, they should be noted in hopes of improving future projects and better understanding this one.

In the city of Philadelphia there are 13 PCAO locations; because of our limited manpower, we only conducted surveys at five. This limited the representation of clients, potentially skewing the data if the five offices were not representative of citywide benefits clientele. In addition, all of this surveying -- conducted from July 1st to July 22nd -- occurred within one month in the middle of summer. It is not unreasonable to assume that client demands placed on the CAOs change month by month and season by season. Because of the limited timeframe of our project, these were factors for which we were simply unable to account. Finally, because these surveys were conducted exclusively in-person at the offices, all the clients who used other tools -- the internet, phone, fax -- to get benefits were excluded from our results.

Their experiences of benefits and churn is wholly absent from our results. Yet another population that was excluded was those who were at the office but unwilling to take the survey. While we can only speculate on their reasons for refusing to participate, their viewpoints would have been valuable inclusions.

Some limitations occurred because of questions we just chose not to ask in order to keep the project within a manageable scope and make the survey more attractive to a client population possibly wary of being interviewed. We completely excluded demographic questions from the survey. We recorded no information about race, gender, age, marital status, socioeconomic status, or the client's household, including dependents like children. Because we did not collect this information, we could not establish any correlations with our own data.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, the final project limitation would be that we were ultimately recording clients' *perceptions* of what happened, not necessarily what actually did occur. Clients' interpretations of PCAO procedures and actions may not correspond with PCAO records.

Team Limitations

While we may be reluctant to admit these things in ourselves or acknowledge them in clients' attitudes, interviewer and selection biases are something that must be taken into account. To be completely forthright: stark ethnic and economic differences existed between our interviewers and the vast majority of PCAO clientele. These differences would have been readily apparent to both parties and innate bias could have affected many personal interactions. Our team members might have been biased against approaching clients they subconsciously saw as intimidating, surly, or unwelcome, while at the same time some clients might have been

unwilling to work with surveyors they perceived as insincere, unsympathetic, or unlikely to create change.

Survey Limitations

As we only came to realize once we began surveying, our survey itself had some faults that created distinct limitations. While the survey was fairly comprehensible, it was created in a short amount of time leading to a few limitations. The survey almost exclusively inquired about events that occurred within the last six months and terminated data collection if events happened outside that scope. This limited the number of valid instances of churn we could document with an arbitrary cutoff. Additionally, we didn't receive enough responses to the documentation section of our survey (see questions 19, 20, and 21 in the survey) to draw confident conclusions; this section should be restructured or moved. Within the survey we did not provide a space within the questions -- notably #10 -- for respondents who had pending applications. Oftentimes we would be interviewing people who had just submitted an application, yet we failed to make room for this on the survey. Finally, pen and paper surveying proved a limitation in and of itself. It was time-consuming and error prone. A more efficient system might involve the use of tablet devices to reduce human error and allow surveyors to skip questions more easily.

Recommendations

Based on the background data, key informant interviews, and limitations observed throughout the interview process, we have determined a set of recommendations for future use. We do not have enough conclusive data to determine the most comprehensive recommendations, because the extent of what we know is that many people did not receive and/or submit their renewal forms.

Increase Trust

In order to close the "trust gap" described earlier, Dr. Levine suggested that assistance offices could consider:

- Supporting caseworkers with the resources they need to support clients. With a reduced caseload, caseworkers would have more time and attention to communicate with clients, improve trust, and reduce churn: inspiring a virtuous cycle rather than a vicious one.
- Caseworkers could be recognized or incentivized when a high percentage of their caseload *does not* experience churn.
- Clients could be provided with greater flexibility during renewal processes regarding requirements and deadlines.

Improve the Notification Process

- We believe that providing more advanced notice to those whose benefits are at risk of being shut off is not only essential in building trust between clients and CAOs, but also in decreasing the number of clients who experience churn. We recommend that PCAO look into additional notification options to give people more notice and time before needing to reapply.
- When clients were left voicemail messages about the status of their benefits, they often found that there was no information left about whom they should contact to proceed with the process. We recommend that when CAOs call clients, they also leave a call back number at which they can be reached.
- Many clients reported that they received no notice prior to their benefits being shut off. For clients whose benefits are at risk of being stopped, notices should be sent by mail, e-

mail, text, and phone call. Utilizing all of these avenues will likely improve communication between clients and CAOs.

Future Study

- We found there to be certain procedural changes within our survey that may have improved the results of our study. We did not include identifying info (i.e. sex, education level, etc.) in our survey. These factors may influence the rate at which people experience churn, so we recommend that they be used in future surveys.
- A few offices consist of a largely Spanish-speaking clientele. We were not always fully prepared with bilingual surveyors, which could have presented bias in our results. For future study, we recommend that that at least one surveyor be assigned to the Somerset and Liberty offices (or any with a largely Spanish speaking population) who is proficient in Spanish. We also recommend that the survey be printed in Spanish as well as English.
- Considering our survey's limitations and scope, our team and the BAWG would benefit from and appreciate access to large-scale, administrative data concerning PA benefits access and retention.

Conclusion

Ultimately, this is a problem the city must face to help people avoid hardship and stay connected to the benefits necessary to maintain the livelihood of the city and its residents' wellbeing. Our recommendations are designed to confront future churn and to set other studies of churn in motion. Implementing these recommendations would require some changes in philosophy and initial investment, but could improve PA DHS's finances, the atmosphere in assistance offices, and clients' everyday lives over the long term.

Appendices

Appendix I: References

“Churn Hurts Clients, DHS Caseloads, and Pennsylvania’s Economy,” Clasp, January 2015.

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"Interview of Graham O'Neill." Personal interview. 29 July 2016. Graham O’Neill is the Benefits Access Coordinator for the Mayor’s Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity.

“Interview with “Jane,” a benefits recipient from Community Legal Services." Telephone interview. 8 Aug. 2016.

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Appendix II: Survey

Survey on Keeping Connected to Benefits

DATE:_____ TIME:_____ LOCATION:_____

Hello, my name is _____. I am conducting a survey with the City of Philadelphia to learn more about your experience with receiving public benefits. Our goal is to improve services. I will not record any information that can personally identify you. I have a few questions that should take less than five minutes. *Please note that you may stop the survey at any point.* Is that OK?

1. What brings you here today? (Prompt with options)
   - ☐ Applying for benefits for the first time
   - ☐ Annual renewal
   - ☐ For an interview
   - ☐ Submitting paperwork
   - ☐ Issue with my current benefit amount
   - ☐ Turning stopped benefits back on
   - ☐ Getting new or replacement EBT card, but not applying for anything
   - ☐ Other (provide detail) _____
2. Why did you decide to come into the office in person instead of using other options like COMPASS, mail, email, or fax?

   _____

   _____
3. Which benefit(s) are you here for today? *(Confirm/deny each option)*
   - ☐ SNAP
   - ☐ Medicaid
   - ☐ TANF/ Cash Assistance
   - ☐ Other (provide detail) _____

   _____
4. Have you *ever* experienced your SNAP, Medicaid or TANF benefits being stopped or turned off?
   - ☐ No-First time applying (If no, skip to question # 28)
   - ☐ No- Never experienced this (If no, skip to question # 28)
   - ☐ Yes
5. The *last time* this happened, which benefits were stopped?
   - ☐ SNAP
   - ☐ Medicaid
   - ☐ TANF/Cash Assistance
6. Do you know why they were stopped ?
   - ☐ No, I'm not sure
   - ☐ Yes, I think I know why
   - ☐ Other (provide detail) _____
7. Did you reapply?
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Yes
8. How long after your benefits stopped did you reapply for those same benefits?
   - ☐ Less than a month
   - ☐ 1-4 months
   - ☐ 4 or more months
   - ☐ Not applicable, didn't reapply

CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE →

9. Was this application approved?
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ Not sure of the status
   - ☐ Not applicable, didn't reapply
10. How did you submit that application?
   - ☐ On my own – filled out a paper application
   - ☐ On my own – COMPASS
   - ☐ Someone helped me – outside agency
   - ☐ In person – at this office
   - ☐ Not applicable, didn't reapply
11. Did this interruption occur in the last six months?
   - ☐ No (If no, skip to question # 28)
   - ☐ Yes

Now I'm going to ask you some questions to find out if problems with the renewal form may have led to your benefits being stopped.

12. Did you get a renewal form within 30 days of your benefits stopping?
   - ☐ No (if no, skip to question, #28)
   - ☐ Yes
13. Was this renewal form clear?
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ Somewhat
14. Was it clear that you had to submit your renewal form?
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ Somewhat
15. Did you submit your renewal form?
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Yes
16. Were you able to submit the renewal form by the deadline?
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ Not sure
   - ☐ Not applicable
17. Did the County Assistance Office receive your renewal form?
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ I don't know
   - ☐ Not applicable

Now we will talk about the verification documents you were asked to provide. These include things like paystubs, bank statements or letters from an employer.

18. Which documents were requested from you? *(Check all that apply.)*
   - ☐ I didn't understand the request
   - ☐ Paystubs
   - ☐ Other kinds of income proof
   - ☐ Job termination letter
   - ☐ Bank statement
   - ☐ Not applicable
   - ☐ Proof of ID
   - ☐ Proof of residence
   - ☐ Proof of immigration status
   - ☐ Proof of number of people in home
   - ☐ Other paperwork (provide detail)

   _____

CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE →

19. Did you submit these documents?
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ Some of them
    - ☐ Not applicable
20. Were you able to submit these documents by the deadline printed on the renewal form?
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ No, received renewal forms after the deadline
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ Not sure
    - ☐ Not applicable

Now we will talk about the interview process for SNAP.

SNAP ONLY

21. Did you get a notice containing your SNAP interview date?
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ Yes
22. How were you asked to complete your interview?
    - ☐ Instructed that a case worker would call me
    - ☐ I was asked to call the interview line
    - ☐ In-person
23. Did you have this interview on the scheduled date and time?
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ Not applicable
24. If no, did you try to reschedule your interview?
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ Yes - was able to reschedule
    - ☐ I tried - unable to reschedule
    - ☐ Not applicable

Now we want to ask about the interview process for TANF.

TANF ONLY

25. Did you get a notice containing your TANF interview date?
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ Yes
26. Did you have an interview on the scheduled date and time?
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ Not applicable
27. Did you try to reschedule?
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ Yes - was able to reschedule
    - ☐ I tried - unable to reschedule
    - ☐ Not applicable

CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE →

Now we have completed the survey questions about your experience. We would like to wrap up by asking you a few questions about your general situation. Is that ok? ***If yes, continue.***

28. Has your address changed in the last 6 months?
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ Yes
29. If yes, where did you move from?
    - ☐ Within Philadelphia
    - ☐ From another city in Pennsylvania
    - ☐ From another state
    - ☐ Not applicable
30. Has your income changed in the last 6 months?
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ Yes - increased
    - ☐ Yes - decreased
31. Have you experienced any hardships in the last 6 months? *(Prompt, check all that apply.)*
    - ☐ I or someone in my family missed a meal
    - ☐ I had to go to a food pantry to get food
    - ☐ I went without prescription drugs
    - ☐ I couldn't go to a medical appointment
    - ☐ I went to the ER instead of my doctor
    - ☐ I couldn't pay a rent/ mortgage
    - ☐ I couldn't pay a utility bill
    - ☐ I had to borrow money
    - ☐ I had to miss work to fix my benefits
    - ☐ Other:_____
      _____

Thank you for your time. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

_____

_____

_____

_____

NOTES (if needed):
General interview notes:

_____

_____

Question # _____:

_____

_____

Question # _____:

_____

_____

Question # _____:

_____

_____

Appendix III: Survey Code Book

1. What brings you here today?
    A. Applying for benefits
        1 = No
        2 = Yes
    B. Annual Renewal
        1 = No
        2 = Yes
    C. For an interview
        1 = No
        2 = Yes
    D. Submitting paperwork
        1 = No
        2 = Yes
    E. Issue with my current benefit amount
        1 = No
        2 = Yes
    F. Turning stopped benefits back on
        1 = No
        2 = Yes
    G. Getting new or replacement EBT card, but not applying for anything
        1 = No
        2 = Yes
    H. Other
        1 = No
        2 = Yes
    Write in answer if they provide detail for other
2. Why did you decide to come into the office in person instead of using other options like COMPASS, mail, email, or fax? *Write in answer*
3. Which benefit(s) are you here for today?
    A. SNAP
        1 = No
        2 = Yes
    B. Medicaid
        1 = No
        2 = Yes
    C. TANF
        1 = No
        2 = Yes
    D. Other
        1 = No
        2 = Yes
4. Have you ever experienced your SNAP, Medicaid or TANF benefits being stopped or turned off?
    1 = No-First time applying
    2 = No-Never experienced this before
    3 = Yes
5. The last time this happened, which benefits were stopped?
    A. = SNAP
        1 = No
        2 = Yes

B. = Medicaid
    1 = No
    2 = Yes
C. = TANF
    1 = No
    2 = Yes

6. Do you know why they were stopped?
    1 = No, I'm not sure
    2 = Yes, I know why
    3 = Other (provide detail) _____
7. Did you reapply?
    1 No
    2 Yes
8. How long after your benefits stopped did you reapply for those same benefits?
    1 = Less than a month
    2 = 1-4 months
    3 = 4 or more months
    99 = Not applicable, didn't reapply
9. Was this application approved?
    1 = No
    2 = Yes
    3 = Not sure of the status
    99 = Not applicable, didn't reapply
10. How did you last apply for those benefits?
    1 = On my own – paper application
    2 = On my own – COMPASS
    3 = Someone helped me – outside agency
    4 = In person – at this office
    99 = Not applicable, didn't reapply
11. Did this interruption occur in the last six months?
    1 = No
    2 = Yes
12. Did you get a renewal form within 30 days of your benefits stopping?
    0 = No
    1 = Yes
13. Was this renewal form clear?
    1 = No
    2 = Yes
    3 = Somewhat
14. Was it clear that you had to submit renewal form?
    1 = No
    2 = Yes
    3 = Somewhat
15. Did you submit your renewal form?
    1 = No
    2 = Yes
16. Were you able to submit the documents by the deadline?
    1 = No
    2 = Yes
    3 = I don't know

99 = Not applicable

17. Did the County Assistance Office receive your renewal form?
    - 0 = No
    - 1 = Yes
    - 2 = I don't know
    - 99 = Not applicable
18. What type of paperwork was requested from you?
    - A. I didn't understand the request
        - 1 = No
        - 2 = Yes
    - B. Paystubs
        - 1 = No
        - 2 = Yes
    - C. Other kinds of income proof
        - 1 = No
        - 2 = Yes
    - D. Job termination letter
        - 1 = No
        - 2 = Yes
    - E. Bank statement
        - 1 = No
        - 2 = Yes
    - F. Not Applicable
        - 1 = No
        - 2 = Yes
    - G. Proof of ID
        - 1 = No
        - 2 = Yes
    - H. Proof of residence
        - 1 = No
        - 2 = Yes
    - I. Proof of immigration status
        - 1 = No
        - 2 = Yes
    - J. Proof of number of people in home
        - 1 = No
        - 2 = Yes
    - K. Other paperwork
        - 1 = No
        - 2 = Yes

Write in answer if they provide detail for "other"

19. Did you submit these documents?
    - 1 = No
    - 2 = Yes
    - 3 = Some of it
    - 99 = Not applicable
20. Were you able to submit the documents by the deadline printed on the renewal form?
    - 1 = No
    - 2 = No- received renewal forms after the deadline
    - 3 = Yes

4 = Not sure
99 = Not applicable

21. Did you get a notice containing your SNAP interview date?
    1 = No
    2 = Yes
22. How were you asked to complete your interview?
    1 = Instructed that a case worker would call me
    2 = I was asked to call the interview line
    3 = In-person
    99 = Not Applicable
23. Did you have an interview on the scheduled date and time?
    1 = No
    2 = Yes
    99 = Not Applicable
24. If no, did you try to reschedule your interview?
    1 = No
    2 = Yes- was able to reschedule
    3 = I tried- unable to reschedule
    99 = Not Applicable
25. Did you get a notice containing your TANF interview date?
    1 = No
    2 = Yes
26. Did you have an interview on the scheduled date and time?
    1 = No
    2 = Yes
    99 = Not Applicable
27. If no, did you try to reschedule your interview?
    1 = No
    2 = Yes- was able to reschedule
    3 = I tried- unable to reschedule
    99 = Not applicable
28. Has your address changed in the last 6 months?
    1 = No
    2 = Yes

29. If yes, where did you move from?
    1 = Within Philadelphia
    2 = From another city
    3 = From another state
    99 = Not applicable
30. Has your income change in the last 6 months?
    1 = No
    2 = Yes-increased
    3 = Yes-decreased
31. As a result of your stopped benefits, did any of the following occur?
    A. I or someone in my family missed a meal
        1 = No
        2 = Yes
    B. I had to go to a food pantry to get food
        1 = No

2 = Yes

C. I went without prescription drugs
   1 = No
   2 = Yes
D. I couldn't go to a medical appointment
   1 = No
   2 = Yes
E. I had to go to the ER instead of my regular doctor
   1 = No
   2 = Yes
F. I couldn't pay a rent/ mortgage
   1 = No
   2 = Yes
G. I couldn't pay utility bill
   1 = No
   2 = Yes
H. I had to borrow money
   1 = No
   2 = Yes
I. I had to miss work to fix my benefits
   1 = No
   2 = Yes
J. Other
   1 = No
   2 = Yes
   Write in answer if they provide detail for "other"

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Write in answer

All other notes

Write in answer