

**REPORT ON
DEVELOPING A SINGLE PURPOSE APPLICATION
AND AUTOMATIC REFERRAL SERVICE FORM
REPORTED TO
THE GOVERNOR
AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



HOUSE DOCUMENT NO. 17

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
DIVISION OF PURCHASES AND SUPPLY
RICHMOND
1979**

Report on House Joint Resolution 80

Prepared by:

Patti Chrzan-Seelig
Office of the Secretary of
Human Resources

Study Group Members:

James Bozarth, Department of
Mental Health and Mental
Retardation
Linda Sawyers, Department of
Welfare
Betty Jo Wright, Department
of Health

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I. Background	1
II. Methodology	2
III. Review of Current Efforts	3
IV. Review of Current Efforts Within the Commonwealth	8
V. Conclusions	9
VI. Recommendations	11
VII. Appendices	
Footnotes	13
Resource Material	14
House Joint Resolution 80	15

BACKGROUND

The General Assembly, in its 1978 session, moved efforts to look at single purpose application forms ahead by the passage of H.J.R. 80. House Joint Resolution 80 requested the Secretary of Human Resources to undertake a study of the feasibility and advisability of developing a single purpose application and automatic referral service form in Virginia.

The single purpose application form has been the object of comment and speculation at every level of government for several years. State and local agencies have identified the need for such a document, looked at available forms and even attempted to develop such a document. These efforts have for the most part resulted in a conviction that the federal government must be behind any initiative in this arena if it is to succeed.

Under the SRS 1115 grant, in Virginia, the Office of the Secretary of Human Resources has been involved in the study and development of a single application form. Arlington County undertook, as one of its Senate Bill 517 efforts, the development of a single purpose application form. The form developed was approximately twenty-two pages in length, color coded for specific programs with a generic cover document. The form was evaluated by workers and management alike, and the consensus was to not implement the form. In documenting its efforts, Arlington concluded by saying any work in the area of single applications would have to be initiated by the Federal government in first developing common definitions for all the various programs.

The Office of the Secretary of Human Resources has, since that time, reviewed several single application forms being used by Departments of Welfare in other states. The review by the Secretary's Office was done in conjunction with the Welfare Department liaison person for the 1115 grant. The work was done at the request of one of the S.B. 517 projects which wanted to review a consolidated form for possible use in the local Welfare department. These efforts never went beyond the review stage, as a result of the local 517 project's decision not to independently develop a form for single purpose application.

METHODOLOGY

After reviewing H.J.R. 80, the Secretary of Human Resources convened a study group for the purpose of carrying out the intent of H.J.R. 80. The study group was composed of:

- one staff member from the Secretary's office,
- a representative from the Health Department,
- a representative from the Mental Health & Mental Retardation Department, and
- a representative from the Welfare Department.

This group provided a broad representation of the major programs which would be affected by the development of a single purpose application with automatic referral service form.

The group was charged with the responsibility of studying the feasibility and advisability of developing a single purpose application and automatic referral form in Virginia and formulating a report to the Secretary of Human Resources prior to September 1, 1978 on its recommendations.

The study group began meeting to accomplish this task in June, 1978. At the first meeting, it was decided each person would individually review the forms and critique them according to the needs of his own agency. Following two weeks of intensive study, the group would reconvene to determine its strategy for carrying the study forward.

REVIEW OF CURRENT EFFORTS

The study group reviewed the Arlington application and the Single Purpose Application with Automatic Referral System (SPAARS) presently being developed in Region VIII. The group also analyzed forms collected from several states: Maryland, Rhode Island, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming. The study group's analysis of each individual effort is presented below.

SPAARS (Single Purpose Application with Automatic Referral System)

"The SPAARS program is a joint participation among the states of Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming in conjunction with the Mountain Plains Federal Regional Council. The SPAARS project is assigned to (A) simplify the application process for individuals seeking assistance from social and economic programs; (B) consolidate application and eligibility forms to meet State and Federal requirements; (C) design a single application form incorporating as many essential State program eligibility requirements as possible; (D) design and implement a referral system which will certify eligibility of the individual to appropriate state programs; and (E) make certain the system will protect the confidentiality of all personal data." 1

Colorado has been the lead agency in the region. The major thrust of the project has been to improve service delivery with savings in administrative cost through development of a single application form. Colorado has developed a single application form which takes in seven major programs (Supplemental Security Income, Title XX Social Services, Medicaid, AFDC, Food Stamps, CETA and Section 8 Housing Assistance). In designing this document, the need became apparent to analyze the regulations and statutes for these programs to identify impediments.

A "Legal Constraints Study" was undertaken by the Colorado SPAARS team which cites the differences in definitions resulting from current categorical program legislation. This study indicates about 70% of the client data was common and 30% was program specific data. Of this 30%, 85% of the problem originated in the regulations, and 15% of the identified problems would require statutory changes. Colorado is now in the process of developing a legislative package for Congress which includes proposed common language for these programs. If acted upon, Colorado will implement the 4.5 page single purpose application for these seven programs.

With the same goal in mind, the Colorado SPAARS team will review an additional eight programs during FY 78-79. These programs are: WIN, Head Start, Drug Abuse, Legal Services, Child and Maternal Health Services, Community Health, Community Mental Health and Vocational Rehabilitation. This study will result in determination of the feasibility of standardized definitions of income and resource and the possible incorporation of these programs into the single application form.

It has only been through the intimate involvement and cooperation of the federal government that SPAARS has progressed thus far. The major drawback to the system as the study group viewed it is that the form has not yet been tested. It is by far, however, the most comprehensive effort undertaken to date.

The Colorado SPAARS team as mentioned previously, has completed the Legal Constraints Study, is preparing a legislative package of proposed language for submission to Congress in December, 1978 and undertaking a feasibility study of combining eight additional programs.

The South Dakota SPAARS effort has completed an automated information system which is referred to as the Integrated Eligibility Determination Unit (IEDU). This system has been implemented in three test sites within the state. The IEDU system can only predict probable eligibility due to federal constraints which limits the information agencies can exchange with one another. The system, as implemented in the three test sites, predicts probable eligibility with 95% accuracy for true eligibility.

Although preliminary data term the South Dakota effort successful, it appears advisable to view the outcome of the legislative package in Congress for common definitions prior to investing in this system.

Arlington

The Arlington single purpose application effort was begun as a part of a Senate Bill 517 project. Arlington is unique in the state because it has a Department of Human Resources which integrates service delivery from several human resources agencies. Arlington's stated purpose was as follows.

"Arlington County's request for a Multi-Purpose Application (MPA) for services offered by the Department of Human Resources (DHR) was based on the need to facilitate service delivery to the citizens. In an environment of expanding demands and diminishing resources, it was felt necessary to reduce the amount of time and effort in administrative and support functions incident to service delivery. We know that there is nothing unique in this observation and effort. Indeed, the need for a single application for all "human services" was stated by then President Nixon in the presidential message that transmitted the Allied Services legislation to Congress in 1973: 'Such (a program) would eventually make it possible to assess the total human service needs of an entire family at a single location with a single application.'" 2

Arlington documented its efforts in detail when it was determined that the County Department of Human Resources (DHR) would not test the application. In summary, the major recommendation was that the development of a single purpose application form which cuts across services provided by the various human resources agencies must be initiated and coordinated at the federal

level and refined by appropriate state agencies. The number and variety of federal regulations involved in the development of a single purpose application necessitates federal initiative in this area.

The Arlington group cited four specific areas in which there were problems. The first area related to the waivers for federal programs and focused on the length of present waivers and potential pitfalls in obtaining waivers from federal agencies, other than DHEW, if that became necessary. The second area addressed was the concern over client's relocation outside the welfare jurisdiction, and the corresponding problems in transferring records from an area which had a single purpose application to an area using multiple application.

The third area focused on the need for common definitions for federal and state terms, as well as problems in the services offered by various Human Resources agencies, and corresponding problems with transfer of waivers. The last issue relates to the need for common definitions, With the variety of different eligibility standards which exist for current programs, careful attention had to be focused on the need to determine eligibility correctly in order to avoid chargebacks for errors.

Maryland

The Maryland material is directed toward service application forms. There were three forms included: an eligibility and statistical reporting document, a client application, and a form to determine service income eligibility. There were no efforts to combine the other welfare components (Financial Assistance, Medicaid, and Food Stamps) into the Maryland service application process, and no efforts to include other agencies.

The State of Maryland was unique in that it was the only state studied which has a Department of Human Resources, and the implications of this are evident on the form. It appears that there is a wider listing of social services available on the service record than in other states.

Instructions for the Maryland form indicates that every time a change occurs in client status, a new form must be completed and submitted. When a worker makes an error, a new form must again be completed. The only time a change is not required is when information and referral is the only service provided. The process of redoing the forms in this manner negates the objective which was to reduce paperwork in the single service application. The problem of updating the actual form is one which should be addressed prior to implementation.

Pennsylvania

A review of the Pennsylvania material indicates that the current form used by the state focuses primarily on the Title XX application process. The material included a cover memorandum in which a state representative concluded

that the attempt to merge service and eligibility requirements had been accomplished "inadequately".

An analysis of the material revealed that revision of the form with the addition of considerable information would be necessary in order to use the form as a single purpose application for welfare programs only. To add other programs outside welfare would mean more revision with the addition of other elements.

Pennsylvania representatives also indicated their system of eligibility application was hampered by the fact that there was not a central repository for forms. Each prime contractor for Title XX services maintains his own file, and the material indicated that some prime contractors might even use additional forms specific to their agency, eg. Office on Aging.

Rhode Island

The Rhode Island form submitted to the study group was a combined application for Financial Assistance, Medicaid, and Food Stamps with a separate sheet for Title XX eligibility. The form did not include programs outside the traditional public welfare sector. From the manual material, it appeared that there was a very comprehensive client information schedule which was required for services. The main effort in Rhode Island is concentrated on the development of a public assistance single purpose application, but even that effort appears to require four separate forms.

West Virginia

The West Virginia effort is explained in the introduction to the manual material of the Social Services Information System.

"The Social Services Information System (SSIS) is an automated information system which provides a means of maintaining records necessary for the proper and efficient operation of the Title XX social service program. Included in the system are records regarding the application and eligibility determination for services, the provision of services and the cost of vendor-provided services. The SSIS also satisfies State and Federal Title XX reporting requirements and aid in the identification of unmet needs.

The SSIS is comprised of two basic records - the family record and the primary recipient record. The family record contains identifying data about the family and the primary recipient record is begun when a goal and a service plan are established for a primary recipient." 3

The West Virginia material indicates that the effort is not truly directed toward a single purpose application, but rather an attempt to fulfill federal reporting requirements. It is a Title XX application and does not include other social services.

Wisconsin

Wisconsin has developed a computerized single eligibility system which is now in operation throughout the state's seventy two counties. The form determines eligibility for three federal programs: Food Stamps, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and Medical Assistance. This system has been cited as reducing both the error rate and the time needed to determine eligibility.

The form, at present, is eighteen pages in length. The State Department of Health and Social Services is in the process of revising the form and plans to reduce the number of pages in the form by 25%. This form is for determining eligibility for financial assistance programs, and does not include eligibility for Title XX services. To be comprehensive and include all the traditional welfare-related programs, this form would need revision.

Wyoming

Wyoming began its efforts at development of a single purpose application form with a common intake document which included 90% of the questions articulated in all the application forms involved. Support for implementation of the form could not be elicited from the Executive Committee comprised of Human Services Administrators. One of the major reasons it was unacceptable to the Committee was because of problems with the Employment Security Agency. Much of the material included in the form was unnecessary for Department of Labor's purposes. Concurrently, much information required by the Department of Labor's computerized ESARS reporting systems, required by federal regulations, was not included in the form.

After being refined, the initial material was also used in the development of a Food Stamp Outreach Program. After study, it was determined by officials in Wyoming that the form duplicated other agencies' outreach efforts. Consequently, a Comprehensive Outreach form was developed to reduce duplicative efforts, and is being tested as part of the SPAARS effort in Wyoming.

"The single purpose application combines social services, vocational rehabilitation, senior citizen centers, family planning, migrant health, legal aid, and school population planning needs assessment and automatic referral services. Consequently, as the Food Stamps Outreach is phased out, the Comprehensive Outreach will expand and improve." 4

After examination of the document proposed, it appeared to be primarily a survey form to determine which services a person desired, and as such was a very complete document even to the point of inclusion of information on whether the person surveyed was willing to volunteer. For a form to use as a tool for needs assessment, this document may prove advantageous for the Commonwealth to review. However, as a single purpose application form, the document is not useful because determination of eligibility is not included.

CURRENT EFFORTS
WITHIN THE
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

In the Commonwealth of Virginia there are efforts underway which would fold into the use of a single purpose application. Some of these efforts are included below.

- 1) Within each of the agencies represented on the study group, there is a Forms Committee which looks at the development of new forms within agencies and attempts to combine and simplify reporting and data collection within each agency. The forms committee also looks at prevention of duplication, format and usability of each form.
- 2) Each agency represented on the study group is involved in the development of computer support for their programs. There is a design effort within the Department of Welfare to develop a Social Services Information System. The system envisioned would include not only Title XX information, but information on clients receiving services, demographic data on clients receiving services, services provided, reasons for the service, resources utilized in service provision and costs associated with these services. The system will also have a financial and accounting subsystem to support it. Certain subsystems have already been implemented, the Foster Care Information System (FOCIS), and the Child Protection Service Information System (CPSIS). The Department is currently defining a time table for full implementation. Financial Services data is already on the Welfare Eligibility Recipient Computer System (WERCS). Currently, a requirements analysis is being concluded on the feasibility of central automation of the Food Stamps Program.

The Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation is working on the development of a comprehensive information system. Certain subsystems have been implemented already within the department: the Reimbursement System (ARS); the Individualized Data Base System for MR (IDB), the Substance Abuse Client Tracking System and the Automated Accounting System.

The Department of Health has computerized the Medicaid system which has been cited as a national model.

- 3) The Department of Health has designed a form to combine applications for the various programs it administers. The Department of Welfare is examining a combined application for Aid to Dependent Children, Medicaid, and Food Stamps.
- 4) As previously referenced, the Office of the Secretary of Human Resources has examined single-purpose applications in connection with the SB 517 projects, and Arlington has developed a form and analyzed the feasibility of its implementation.

CONCLUSIONS

After review of the material from other states, the Arlington effort, and the Colorado SPAARS, the study group concluded that for Virginia to begin to develop a single purpose application at this time, would be a duplication of efforts that are going on in other states. Further, the SPAARS system in Colorado, appears to be addressing the major concerns which came from the study group's review of other single purpose applications. The need to analyze federal statues and definitions in seven major programs to identify constraints to the development of a single purpose application was the primary concern of the group and the SPAARS "Legal Constraints Study" is addressing that issue.

The study group's analysis of the various forms showed up several needs at the federal level. The first and most important is the need to have common definitions (language) for all the human service programs. Part of this problem has been addressed by the SPAARS "Legal Constraint Study" and their development of a legislative package for common definitions in the seven programs studied but much more must be done. The common definitions lead to the further problems of revising existing regulations and seeking statutory revisions. It is the study group's opinion that with the greater manpower resources at the federal level and the increasing interest in streamlining government these efforts could be brought to fruition quickly if the government makes a strong commitment to the process.

The SPAARS system was the most advanced effort we reviewed within the confines of our study. With the broad perspective of the SPAARS system, and the years of development which have gone into it, the study group has determined it would be duplicative and unnecessarily time consuming to repeat this effort. It should be noted this system is not without its drawbacks. The most serious problem, as perceived by the study group, is that the form has not yet been tested.

For a single application form with automatic referral to be effective, it has to be supported by a coordinated, comprehensive computer system. Systems within the Commonwealth are at varying stages of development and those programs which have been automated do not yet have any established linkages between the systems. For instance, the Medicaid System in the Health Department has not yet been tied into the Financial Eligibility system in the Welfare Department. Food Stamp reporting to the State Department of Welfare is operated under a manual system. Interface must be established by these systems if we are to look toward the eventuality of utilizing a single purpose application with a automatic referral service form.

Finally, the study group dealt with the issue of increasing stress being put on agencies by the federal government for accountability of the funds they receive and the programs they administer. It was the opinion of the group that without assurance of federal support for such a form, states would be unwilling to implement it. Arlington stated in analyzing their efforts that the effort to implement the form would not be worth the time and energy

needed at the local level to accomplish such a task, unless the federal government could assure that it would not have to revert to another system the following year. An observation of the group which should be noted in these conclusions is that with the development of a single purpose application form, corresponding support of and training of staff who implement the forms is necessary. A comprehensive form must be accompanied by well-trained staff, knowledgeable about all programs and resources, and willing to use the form to its fullest capacity.

Following the study, the group's analysis of the various documents and the conclusions put forth above, the study group made several recommendations. If implemented, these recommendations will further the progress of the Commonwealth towards being able to viably use a single purpose application with automatic referral service form.

RECOMMENDATIONS

adopted by

The Study Group for H.J.R. 80

The study group reached the consensus that the single purpose application with the automatic referral form could be implemented in Virginia if common definitions for all human service programs are adopted at the federal level. Additionally, the issue of a single standard of eligibility would need to be resolved at the federal level if the form is to be used for both intake and eligibility purposes.

In order for a single purpose application form to have value, it must be based on a common language for all programs. This is not yet the case at the federal level. It is the study group's opinion, that with the Colorado SPAARS effort heavily involved in the development of a common language at the federal level, the Commonwealth of Virginia need not invest the time to begin this effort again.

There are steps, however, which the Commonwealth could take to continue efforts towards a single purpose application with automatic referral service form. These recommendations are stated below.

1. The Secretary of Human Resources should appoint one of her staff to stay abreast of development in the Colorado SPAARS system and other single application efforts. This person should also keep the Secretary apprised as to developing federal initiatives in this area.
2. The Secretary of Human Resources should reaffirm her support of Executive Order #52 in an effort to encourage state human resources agencies to combine forms whenever practical and to eliminate any unnecessary items. In addition, agencies should be encouraged to combine application forms for programs for which they are responsible.
3. The Secretary of Human Resources should take appropriate action to begin to develop linkages between agencies on the combining of forms.
4. The Secretary of Human Resources should express to HEW Region III officials the Commonwealth's support of the Region VIII effort in its submission of a legislative package proposing common definitions for programs.

APPENDIX A

Footnotes

1. Legal Constraints Study, by Colorado SPAARS Team, March, 1977.
2. Arlington Final Report, by Arlington Senate Bill 517 Project, August, 1977.
3. Social Services Manual for West Virginia, n.d., n.p..
4. Single Purpose Application with Automatic Referral System, Wyoming, n.d.

APPENDIX B

Resource Material

- A. Arlington County Final Report, Arlington, Virginia Senate Bill 517 Project, 1977.
- B. The Legal Constraints Study, Colorado SPAARS Team, 1977.
- C. Maryland Single Purpose Application Form*, Maryland Department of Human Resources, n.d.
- D. Pennsylvania Single Purpose Application Form*, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, n.d.
- E. Rhode Island Single Purpose Application Form*, Rhode Island Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services, n.d.
- F. SPAARS (Single Purpose Application with Automatic Referral System), Colorado SPAARS Team, n.d.
- G. West Virginia Single Purpose Application Form*, West Virginia Department of Welfare, n.d.
- H. Wisconsin Single Purpose Application Form*, Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services, n.d.
- I. Wyoming Single Purpose Application Form*, Wyoming Department of Health and Social Services, n.d.

*All of the application forms submitted for review, by request of the Office of the Secretary of Human Resources, were accompanied by explanatory material.

NOTE: All documents are on file in the Secretary of Human Resources Office and are available for review by interested parties.

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 80

Offered February 1, 1978

Requesting the Secretary of Human Resources to study and report on social services single purpose application and referral forms.

Patrons—Ashworth and Anderson, C. W.

Referred to the Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions

WHEREAS, thousands of Virginia families are in need of assistance from social service agencies yearly; and

WHEREAS, persons in need of such assistance are often discouraged from seeking it because of the bureaucratic maze and complicated paperwork; and

WHEREAS, such paperwork many times results in inefficiency, duplication of effort and wasted tax dollars; and

WHEREAS, several other states have successfully developed a single purpose application with automatic referral service for clients needing services from one or more agencies; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Secretary of Human Resources is requested to undertake a study of the feasibility and advisability of developing such a single purpose application and automatic referral service form in Virginia and to report his recommendations thereon to the Governor and General Assembly no later than October one, nineteen hundred seventy-eight.

Official Use By Clerks

Agreed to By

The House of Delegates

without amendment

with amendment

substitute

substitute w/amdt

Agreed to By The Senate

without amendment

with amendment

substitute

substitute w/amdt

Date: _____

Date: _____

Clerk of the House of Delegates

Clerk of the Senate

