

**INTERIM REPORT OF THE  
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

# **Status of Child Care Automation**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND  
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



## **HOUSE DOCUMENT NO. 8**

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
RICHMOND  
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# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

October 15, 2001

TO: The Honorable James S. Gilmore, III

and

The General Assembly of Virginia

The Department of Social Services (Department) is required by the 2000 Appropriations Act, Item 387, paragraph L, to report by October 15 of each year on the status of efforts to develop and implement an automated system for the child care assistance programs. I am pleased to provide you with this status report on our efforts to develop an automated system for the child care program.

## **BACKGROUND**

The 1998 Appropriations Act, item 402 N, directed the Department of Social Services to report on a plan for automating the child care assistance programs. A report submitted to the Chairs of the House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Finance Committee on October 15, 1998, concluded that integrating the child care program into the existing "On-line Automated Services Information System" (OASIS) was the most beneficial alternative. The target date for full implementation of automation of the child care program was established as the end of calendar year 1999.

In 1999, the co-chairmen of the House Appropriations Committee requested the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) to complete a special review of OASIS. JLARC'S report, issued on February 1, 2000, strongly recommended that any effort to develop an automated information system for child care assistance programs be delayed pending:

- 1) A comprehensive redesign of the adoption, foster care, and child protective services components of OASIS;
- 2) Pilot tests of the redesigned components; and
- 3) Training of local agency staff in the use of the redesigned components.

## **OASIS COMMITTEE ACTIONS**

Responding to user input and the JLARC recommendations, the Department delayed further development of the child care program component in OASIS and focused available resources on modifying the existing OASIS system. Key to this effort was the formation of an OASIS Steering Committee consisting of local agency directors and staff who helped shape the focus and direction of OASIS development.

The Department, working with the Virginia League for Social Service Executives, and under the guidance of the OASIS Steering Committee, formed subject matter expert panels for the adoptions, foster care, child protective services, adult services, generic services, and child care programs. The subject matter expert panels conducted a review of their respective program areas and how user and program needs could be incorporated into the OASIS application. The OASIS recommendations from the foster care, adoption and child protective services expert panels have resulted in OASIS enhancements and increased training of local workers.

On a regular basis, the Department releases modifications and enhancements to the OASIS system to improve the system's ability to meet the business needs of the users. The modifications/enhancements are identified by the expert panels for the different program areas and prioritized by the OASIS Steering Committee and programs. OASIS Version 2.3 was released on July 31, 2001, and included enhancements for the child protective services and foster care programs. The enhancements increased the supervisor's ability to use OASIS in monitoring foster care cases and allowed workers to document child protective services investigations more efficiently.

The Department is currently working on OASIS Version 2.4, which is scheduled for release in December 2001. This release will include reports that will help manage the adoptions program and continue the refinement of the child protective services investigative report. Changes to the foster care service plan screen will enable workers to enter data in a more efficient and effective manner.

## **OASIS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHILD CARE AUTOMATION**

The child care program expert panel conducted a review of the OASIS application and provided input on incorporating child care program services. In addition, the child care program expert panel completed design work on a number of case management functions that could be incorporated into OASIS.

On January 30, 2001, the OASIS Steering Committee recommended that efforts to automate the child care program be postponed, based on the following reasons:

- Additional system needs had been identified in the program areas that already utilize the OASIS application. The resources needed to refine the existing program areas within the OASIS application have not been readily available. To further develop and implement the child care program would have the potential to take away from the resource needs of the program areas currently utilizing the OASIS application.
- A need for an OASIS project manager position to provide oversight for the entire application was identified. This position will have the responsibility to research the need for additional OASIS subsystems, as well as prepare options to meet identified needs for the Steering Committee. The full time project manager for OASIS was hired on August 2, 2001.
- The technological capacity of local departments of social services to manage child care program cases and issue payments has continued to evolve independently of state efforts to provide an automated system. Many local departments have developed in-house systems to meet their needs. This issue may become more of a factor when assessing the reporting needs of local agencies with those of the Department.

## **CUURENT DEVELOPMENTS**

The Department is implementing a new management system for the acquisition of information technology called Investment Management (ITIM). The ITIM framework provides a standard repeatable process for selecting and monitoring IT initiatives, requiring system development requests to demonstrate strategic alignment and assessment of total costs of ownership. It is recommended that system development options for the child care program be evaluated within that framework.

The Division of Information Systems (DIS) is adopting standard, consistent practices in project development, project management, quality assurance, and business support. These DIS developments will be critically supportive of the child care automation process.

The Department has begun evaluation of options for automating the administration of child care assistance programs. Current DIS developments and adoption of the ITIM methodology leave the Department well positioned to select the most appropriate solution for this program and establish a timeframe for successful implementation.

This status report is estimated to cost the Commonwealth of Virginia \$1,200 and 30 staff hours to complete.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sonia Rivero". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Sonia Rivero  
Commissioner