

**REPORT OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

# **Status of Child Care Automation**

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



## **REPORT NO. 1**

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
RICHMOND  
2003**



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

October 11, 2002

**TO:** The Honorable Mark R. Warner  
and  
The General Assembly of Virginia

The 2002 Appropriations Act, Item 360 K, establishes the intent of the General Assembly that the Department of Social Services (Department) should automate the Child Care Program and directs the Department to report on the status of such automation, system adequacy, and needed action by October 15 of each year. This status report details the Department's efforts to develop an automated system for the Child Care Program.

### **BACKGROUND**

A report submitted to the Chairmen 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 for automating the Child Care Program. 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 the Child Care Program 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 STEERING 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 departments of social services' directors and staff who helped shape the focus and direction of OASIS development. On January 30, 2001, the OASIS Steering Committee recommended that efforts to automate the Child Care Program again 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 was to have the responsibility to research the need for additional OASIS subsystems, as well as prepare options to meet identified needs for the Oasis Steering Committee. The project manager position for OASIS was filled in August 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 of social services have developed in-house systems to meet their needs.

## **CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS**

In the fall of 2001, the Department reconvened the Child Care Users' Group to document and update the automation needs for the Child Care Program, evaluate the potential to build on existing systems, and research other states' initiatives in automating their Child Care Program. The Child Care Users' Group has outlined the needed components for a Child Care System and discussed the business processes needed in a comprehensive Child Care System.

The Child Care Bureau (CCB) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families has recognized that lead agencies

administering the Child Care and Development Fund need better tools to help them manage an increasingly complex program. The CCB commissioned the development of the Child Care Electronic Environment: A System Automation Worktool (CEE: SAW) as a tool to help child care agencies take full advantage of the various components of a comprehensive child care system while ensuring that the child care agencies are able to meet the new Federal reporting requirements for child care. The system specifications for CEE: SAW provide a baseline design to guide the development and adaptation of automated systems used in the administration of child care subsidy programs. CEE: SAW has been created to help child care lead agencies meet their own outstanding needs for a single, integrated system capable of supporting efficient service delivery and timely, accurate and reliable data reporting. The Child Care Users' Group has reviewed and will be using CEE: SAW as a model for the design of an automated system.

A Project Manager designated solely for the Child Care Program has been selected. This position has been identified as critical in the success of the development of the Child Care Automation System and will provide overall guidance to the Child Care Project team. The Project Manager will be tasked with: providing leadership on a system design that builds on existing systems within the Department; researching other states' initiatives; and assisting with interfaces to the current information system architecture of the Department.

The Department has implemented a new management system for the acquisition of information technology called Investment Management (ITIM). The Child Care Automation development will be advanced within that framework.

The Department continues its support to obtain and provide a comprehensive Child Care Automated System to manage the Child Care Program. The Child Care Program is crucial to the goal of serving those in need, strengthening families and helping them toward self-sufficiency. A fully automated system for child care will improve both state and local management of the program; improve the ability to analyze encumbrances and expenditures; assess child care unmet needs; and provide timely information regarding children and families served, providers utilized, and provide data on the costs of child care.

Respectfully submitted,



Ray C. Goodwin  
Acting Commissioner