



**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

October 15, 2004

TO: The Honorable Mark R. Warner

and

The Honorable Vincent F. Callahan, Jr., Chair
House Appropriations Committee

and

The Honorable John H. Chichester, Chair
Senate Finance Committee

Study Mandate

This status report is submitted pursuant to the 2004 Appropriations Act, Item 362 J, which establishes the intent of the General Assembly to automate the child care program. Item 362 J requires that:

“The Virginia Department of Social Services shall report to the Governor and the General Assembly by October 15 of each year regarding the status of such automation, system adequacy, and needed actions.”

Background

The child care program has grown significantly over the past decade. Expenditures have increased from approximately \$9 million in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 1989 to over \$150 million in SFY 2004. In SFY 2004, child care assistance was provided to over 58,000 children. The child care program is the single largest assistance program administered by the Department of Social Services. Steps have been taken toward a comprehensive automated system to support the program. However, comprehensive automation is not yet fully operational. Without full automation, providing timely program data in an efficient manner is difficult.

Automation to support this major program has been limited. Case and client information is contained in the Virginia Client Information System (VACIS), a system developed in the early 1980s. The present Interim Day Care System is a MAPPER-based application that tracks expenditures and counts of children and families served.

Automation for the child care program is not currently a part of either of the department's two major systems that support local programs, ADAPT (Application Benefit Delivery Automation Project) or OASIS (On-line Automated Services Information System). ADAPT is the system for TANF, Food Stamps, and, in the future, other eligibility programs. OASIS is currently supporting foster care, adoptions, child protective services and in the future, is planned to support other child welfare and adult service programs.

Current Developments

The Department has moved forward in providing monthly child care program reports to both state and local agency users via the local department of social services web site. The program reports contain data on individual program codes, budget lines for children served through subsidies, and a breakdown of the ages and types of placements children receive in care. Statistical reports on counts of families and children served, expenditure information and child care exception reports are also available. Graphs have also been made available to users. In May, 2004, the Department began publishing service-based VACIS reports to local department of social services web site. This conversion from print to internet access provides immediate access to client information for the local user and saves an estimated \$50,000 per year in printing costs for the state.

The Child Care Project continues to make progress in satisfying child care user requirements:

- The Child Care Users' Group finalized overall system requirements for a comprehensive child care automated system, using the Child Care Electronic Environment: a System Automation Worktool (CEE: SAW) as a guide. The Child Care Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families developed CEE: SAW as a baseline designed to guide states' development and adaptation of automated systems used in the administration of child care subsidy programs.
- The Child Care Users' Group prioritized user requirements into categories of mandated elements, enhancement elements and progressive elements.
- In preparation for implementing the Child Care Project as part of a department-wide consolidated system, the following actions have taken place:
 - A consultant has been hired to gather multiple user requirements and provide leadership in the development of a simplified sign-on across multiple systems.

- Development of an in-house application for a single customer ID across multiple systems as a component of the Child Care Project is in the pilot stages.
 - The Department is exploring a generic repository for fiscal information as a component of the Child Care Project.
 - Data currently held in the Division of Licensing Programs automated system is being reviewed for access by local department of social services users as a component of the Child Care Project.
- The research and documentation necessary to incorporate interfaces of all the state social services systems is progressing in collaboration with the VITA (Virginia Information Technologies Agency). VITA is providing system oversight, guidance and assistance in locating vendors to meet the system communication mandate as well as providing a standard for state procurement.
 - Research and evaluation of the Child Care Project automation is included within the Department's Information Technology Strategic Plan. The Child Care Project is one of two Department major initiatives that have been promoted to VITA. The Department will pursue automation through its partnership with VITA.
 - A Child Care Project Request for Proposals (RFP) is being developed. Department Information Systems staff are working with VITA to develop the RFP. The RFP will include high level requirements as part of the Department's overall automation needs as well as detailed requirements for the Child Care Program.

Summary

A fully automated child care system will improve state program management, allowing analysis of encumbrances and expenditures, assessment of unmet child care needs and provide timely information regarding children and families served, providers utilized, and costs associated with child care. In addition, local departments of social services will have data with which to assess local programs, make comparisons to other localities and manage their child care program operations and expenditures. The Department continues its support to obtain and provide a comprehensive child care automated system to manage the child care program, as well as provide the framework for a Department-wide integrated system. The Department is working closely with VITA to promote the Child Care Project and ensure that automation efforts are consolidated across program areas whenever possible.

Respectfully submitted,



Maurice A. Jones
Commissioner