



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**  
*Office of the Commissioner*

Anthony Conyers, Jr.  
Commissioner

October 15, 2006

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** The Honorable Timothy M. Kaine  
Governor of Virginia

The General Assembly of Virginia

**FROM:** Anthony Conyers, Jr. *Anthony Conyers, Jr.*

**SUBJECT:** Annual Report on Child Care Automation

**Study Mandate**

This status report is submitted pursuant to Item 334 (J) of the 2006 Appropriations Act, which establishes the intent of the General Assembly for the Department of Social Services to automate the child care program. Item 334 (J) provides:

*“The Department 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 action.”*

**Background**

The child care subsidy program has grown significantly over the past decade. Expenditures have increased from approximately \$9 million in state fiscal year (SFY) 1989 to over \$176 million in SFY 2006. In SFY 2006, child care assistance was provided to over 61,000 children. The child care program is one of the largest assistance programs 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 complete. Without full automation, providing timely program data in an efficient manner is difficult.

Automation to support the child care 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 department is reviewing the VACIS system to determine how to migrate the remaining programs and users to newer technology. The present Interim Day Care System is a MAPPER-based application that tracks expenditures and counts of children and families served. The MAPPER system is being analyzed for the purpose of moving the functionality toward newer technology while meeting the needs of the users.

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

### **Current Developments**

The department provides monthly child care program reports to both state and local agency users via the local department of social services web site. The reports include budget data on children served through subsidies and a breakdown of the ages and types of placements. Statistical reports and graphs on counts of families and children served, expenditure information and child care exception reports are also available. In May, 2004, the department began publishing service-based VACIS reports on the local departments 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, the department's child care automation project, continues to progress in satisfying child care user requirements:

- In preparation for implementing the Child Care Project as part of a department-wide consolidated system, the following actions have taken place:
  - A consultant was hired to gather multiple user requirements and provide leadership in the development of a simplified sign-on across multiple systems. This effort assisted in the development of an in-house application for a single customer ID across multiple systems as a component of the Child Care Project. This interface, Systems Partnering in a Demographic Repository (SPIDeR), allows the 120 local departments of social services, department staff and more than 25 Community Action Programs to see all the cases that a client has within the department. The interface reduces the number of sign-ons that workers must use to access various applications, and it reduces data entry, improves data quality and increases productivity. SPIDeR uses a master customer ID database that makes it possible to find the same individuals

across multiple systems in one concise data view. It allows viewing of the composite records and moves the agency closer to the goal of having an integrated social services delivery system.

- The department has made progress in the conceptual exploration of a generic repository for fiscal information as a component of the Child Care Project. This project is being reviewed by the department's Division of Family Services in order to meet their needs in responding to a federal mandate.
  - Data currently held in the Division of Licensing Programs automated system is now available on the public and local agency web site and will be incorporated into the Child Care Project.
  - The waiting list for child care has been automated and implemented in local departments of social service. At any given time, the local departments and the state office are able to see the numbers of families and children awaiting subsidy.
  - A monthly report has been developed which provides financial data to the local departments of social service to assist them in the management of child care funds for their locality. This report provides an accounting of funds expended and projected surpluses or deficits for each budget line.
- The research and documentation necessary to incorporate interfaces of all the state social services systems is progressing in collaboration with the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA). 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. The department reviewed Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act proposals with the Child Care Project in mind.
  - 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 major initiatives that have been promoted to VITA. The department will pursue automation through its partnership with VITA.
  - A Child Care Project Request for Information (RFI) was developed in cooperation with VITA. The RFI included high level requirements as part of the department's overall automation needs as well as detailed requirements for child care. While information from vendors was obtained, this effort was paused as the department moves toward Business Process Re-Engineering. The re-structuring of the business of social services will impact any effort to automate benefits and services delivered in the Commonwealth.

- Efforts are underway to look at the department's business needs as a whole and the consolidation and integration of similar business processes which will lead to streamlined automation efforts. Workgroups have been established and are meeting to lead this effort along with local agency partners.

### **Summary**

A fully automated child care system will improve state program management, allow analysis of encumbrances and expenditures and 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 to provide the framework for a department-wide integrated system. The department continues to work closely with VITA to promote the Child Care Project and ensure that automation efforts are a part of the department's integrated system.