



Department of Social Services Internal Audit:
Evaluation of current programmatic strategies
and operating structures and recommendations

December 2008



Department of
Social Services
Building a Stronger Louisiana

Overview:

1. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 19 percent of people in Louisiana live below the federal poverty level and 22 percent of families with related children under age 18 live in poverty.
2. The mission of the Department of Social Services (DSS) is "to effectively and efficiently guide individuals, children and families toward independence and safety through integrated quality services and partnerships in an environment of opportunity and accountability."
3. This audit reveals that DSS has an opportunity to realign processes and programs to better meet the current needs of the agency by integrating the service delivery system across program offices, modernizing business processes, redesigning the operational structure to recognize and mitigate operational risks, and maximizing integration opportunities with internal and external partners to leverage resources.

Key Findings:

1. This report identifies broad programmatic and operational needs common across service areas including vulnerable children and at-risk families, poverty reduction and workforce development, and education and family supports.
2. There is need for a coordinated and integrated customer service delivery system, especially for continuum of care and wrap-around services.
3. There is need for DSS to renew its focus and investment in program efforts with evidence-based solutions and not dilute resources on multiple, unmeasured activities. This focus includes strengthening and coordinating efforts to ensure the safety of children receiving services and reducing poverty by leveraging collaboration with partners, focusing on interventions in education, workforces development and family supports.
4. To ensure quality service, DSS needs to focus on staff recruitment, training and retention.
5. DSS has an opportunity to realign processes and programs to better meet the current needs of the agency by integrating the service delivery system across program offices, modernizing business processes and redesigning the operational structure to recognize and mitigate operational risks and maximizing integration opportunities with internal and external partners to leverage resource.

Strategic Recommendations:

1. Modernize and realign business operations and program practices, including Informational Technology functions like service integration, program enrollment, provider/payment management, electronic case management and paperless process.
2. Produce cost savings, streamline operations, improve program performance and better utilize and leverage internal and external resources including non-state general fund resources by ensuring continuous improvement processes align with business needs and priorities and ensuring that DSS programming is outcomes-driven and evidence-based.
3. Streamline administrative and service support operations through centralization and/or outsourcing appropriate functions to community-based organizations and/or private industry. Outsourcing may include allowing internal departments flexibility to restructure and redesign their own workflow processes so that they may compete with others to continue operations that meet specified outcomes.
4. Collaborate and leverage resources with state agencies for partnership in poverty reduction programs that rely heavily on workforce training and supports and paths to high school graduation.
5. Modernize approach to client care/intervention by discarding the "one-size fits all" approach and instead match the type and level of intervention to the service needed.
6. Reform the system of residential treatment services for children who are in or at risk of being placed in residential treatment with a focus on meaningful licensing standards, service delivery on the residential level of care, clear criteria for placement and analyzing reimbursement and fee structure, service treatment to determine the range of services and models for population needs, and Office of Community Services administration of residential treatment.
7. Provide Child Protective Services with the tools needed to ensure the quality care of children.
8. Continue to invest in early childhood development through Child Care Quality and other resources.
9. Remove barriers to access services and resources.
10. Develop a DSS Customer Service Center that serves as a single point of contact/reporting, a client and provider resource, and a case triage management center to ensure a seamless entry into the DSS system as well as many other functions.
11. Expand feedback from staff, clients and providers.
12. Integrate service delivery.
13. Redesign the Disaster Food Stamp Program and integrate into emergency preparedness.
14. Create a unified long-term plan for fulfilling the ESF-6 mission.
15. Ensure that citizens have confidence that they will be protected from harm, have appropriate shelter and supportive services, and have the opportunity to return home as quickly as possible.
16. Continue to convene regular stakeholder forums and expands survey work of staff, clients, and providers.
17. Work to reduce poverty by leveraging collaborations with partners, focusing on high-impact, evidence-based educational programming and workforce support collaborations.
18. Reduce the incidence and impact of fraud and abuse by ensuring continuous improvement processes align with business needs and priorities.

Introduction and Overview

- **The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 19 percent of people in Louisiana live below the federal poverty level and 22 percent of families with related children under age 18 live in poverty.**
- **The mission of the Department of Social Services (DSS) is "to effectively and efficiently guide individuals, children and families toward independence and safety through integrated quality services and partnerships in an environment of opportunity and accountability."**
- **This audit reveals that DSS has an opportunity to realign processes and programs to better meet the current needs of the agency by integrating the service delivery system across program offices, modernizing business processes, redesigning the operational structure to recognize and mitigate operational risks, and maximizing integration opportunities with internal and external partners to leverage resources.**

This report is a result of an organizational and operational audit conducted of the Louisiana Department of Social Services. This internal audit was led by the Executive Management Team and includes an in-depth evaluation of program office functions, staff interviews, stakeholder meetings and a review of collateral information provided by the Legislative Auditor. The objective of the internal audit was to broadly assess current programmatic strategies and operating structures and to develop strategic recommendations to improve the cost, efficiency and effectiveness of services provided to the State.

The current mission of DSS is "to effectively and efficiently guide individuals, children and families toward independence and safety through integrated quality services and partnerships in an environment of opportunity and accountability." This mission is driven by DSS's

vision that Louisiana's families, children and individuals be safe, thriving and self-sufficient. It is critical for DSS to be responsible stewards of public assets in order to provide citizens with services in a cost-effective, high quality manner.

Louisiana has faced severe social and economic difficulties for many years. Incarceration rates are among the highest in the nation. Health status and educational achievement are among the lowest in the nation. Common to these and many other indicators of a state's well being and a community's ability to thrive economically and socially is poverty. Poverty is also a strong predictor of child abuse and neglect. Reducing poverty is one of the key factors in improving the quality of life for Louisiana's citizens. It is especially imperative in times of economic downturns that Louisiana, in part through DSS, focuses on what works to reduce poverty among its citizens and improve the economic and social well being of all.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 19 percent of people in Louisiana live below the federal poverty level and 22 percent of families with related children under 18 years of age live in poverty. In any given month, a large percentage of Louisiana residents receive services from DSS through a variety of programs including

"Reducing poverty, therefore, seems to be a key factor in improving the quality of life for Louisiana's citizens. It is especially imperative in times of economic downturns that Louisiana, in part through the Department of Social Services, focuses on what works to reduce poverty among its citizens and improve the economic and social well being of all."

food stamps, family assistance, child care assistance, employment assistance and support enforcement services. In June 2008, for instance DSS distributed \$121 million to 600,000 cases/clients through the Office of Family Support (OFS)

(accounting for more than 90 percent), the Office of Community Services (OCS) and Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS). The volume of citizens served in these programs indicates a need for the enhancement of outcome driven initiatives that are designed to promote long-term self sufficiency with a strategic focus on improving the welfare of vulnerable children and at-risk families and reducing poverty through education and workforce supports.

The results of this audit reveal that DSS has an opportunity to realign processes and programs to better meet the current needs of the agency by integrating the service delivery system across program offices, modernizing business processes, redesigning the operational structure to recognize and mitigate operational risks, and maximizing integration opportunities with internal and external partners to leverage resources. An honest review of DSS's current operations indicates the need and opportunity for transforming the structures and functions of the organization to more effectively and efficiently meet desired outcomes. This will require an intense focus on evidence-based programming, resource leveraging, and collaboration within the organization, across departmental lines and with community based organizations, stakeholders and recipients of services.

Key Findings and Themes

- **This report identifies broad programmatic and operational needs common across service areas including, vulnerable children and at-risk families, poverty reduction and workforce development, and education and family supports.**
- **There is need for a coordinated and integrated customer service delivery system, especially for continuum of care and wrap-around services.**
- **There is need for DSS to renew its focus and investment in program efforts with evidence-based solutions and not dilute resources on multiple, unmeasured activities. This focus includes strengthening and coordinating efforts to ensure the safety of children receiving services and reducing poverty by leveraging collaboration with partners, focusing on interventions in education, workforces development and family supports.**
- **To ensure quality service, DSS needs to focus on staff recruitment, training and retention.**
- **DSS has an opportunity to realign processes and programs to better meet the current needs of the agency by integrating the service delivery system across program offices, modernizing business**

processes and redesigning the operational structure to recognize and mitigate operational risks and maximizing integration opportunities with internal and external partners to leverage resource.

Common Programmatic and Operational Needs

In examining how DSS supports safe and thriving children and families as well as promotes long-term self-sufficiency, we identified broad programmatic and operational needs common across service areas and the clients we serve. From the perspective of these clients, we look at how they access and progress through the system in three key service areas addressing:

- *Vulnerable Children and At-Risk Families*
- *Poverty Reduction and Workforce Development*
- *Education (e.g. early childhood education) and Family Supports*

Specific to the needs of clients we serve, we find the need for a coordinated and integrated customer service delivery system, especially the continuum of care and wrap-around services. The current service delivery system within DSS is fragmented and does not support the provision of comprehensive services nor is there a single point of contact or entry for a client, advocate or provider/partner. For instance, individuals receiving child care assistance so that they may seek employment do not typically receive workforce training if indeed that is a barrier to gaining employment.

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In similar fashion, complementary assistance programs may exist between DSS and another state agency (or other external partner) to serve a specific client base yet DSS does not fully leverage all resources in collaboration with external partners to best serve the client. For in-

stance, OCS and the Department of Health and Hospital's Office of Mental Health have the opportunity to more fully leverage federal funding for children requiring services of both agencies.

Importantly, strengthened and coordinated efforts to ensure the safety of children receiving services in residential care are also greatly needed. Residential group homes provide services for at-risk youth who have been removed from their homes due to court interventions, abuse and neglect. The current system lacks sufficient controls to adequately ensure the safety of children we serve and provide a continuity of care among providers.

There is also a substantial need for DSS to renew its focus and investment in program efforts with evidence-based solutions and not dilute resources and capacities on multiple, unmeasured activities. Investments in Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), referred to in Louisiana as the Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program (FITAP) which provides time limited monthly cash assistance pay-

ments to families in need, have certainly not been maximized or even organized around proven interventions with outcomes that serve the client as well as the purpose of the program. While many of the programs funded through TANF may be well-intentioned and provide needed services,

many have not or cannot be measured in relation to the desired outcomes of DSS. DSS currently has allocated approximately \$90 million (FY08) for core TANF welfare programs and another roughly \$80 million in more than 25 initiatives targeting literacy, asset building, and family stability. TANF administers over 250 contracts at over \$55 million across its initiatives this year on a cost reimbursement or fee for service basis. Few if any rely on performance measures related to the goals of the initiatives to drive the contracted services. DSS does not currently have good measure of how well these initiatives address family stability and poverty reduction through education and workforce

supports.

Modernization, Fraud and Recovery

From the perspective of how DSS manages core services and processes client assistance, we find common need for operational improvement in:

- *Modernization*
- *Fraud and Recovery*

Perhaps the most pervasive need found across DSS is the need for the modernization and restructuring of Information Technology (IT) solutions to align with business needs and processes. From inefficient and error prone payment systems to the lack of a master client index that would allow client tracking alongside service tracking, IT modernization is critical to DSS's ability to more efficiently and effectively manage its programs and services and demonstrate the impact of DSS's work.

We have also identified a strong need for an improved system of staff recruitment, training and retention including frontline leadership program and succession planning methods. The loss of employees with critical management and program experience can lead to a gap in services and the loss of institutional knowledge. One of the most critical areas of staff/client relationships is in OCS, which experiences an extremely

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high turnover rate and lack of training tools/time needed in the highly sensitive and intense work done with the children they serve. Updated technology may provide some remedy but a more modern, industry-based recruitment, training and retention system is required DSS wide. Another example elsewhere in DSS is the need for staff training in LRS. This is crucial to program success and client outcomes. There is currently a critical shortage of qualified rehabilitation counselors that has resulted in the continuous increase in turnover and hiring of new staff in the agency's critical positions including the qualified rehabilitation counselor positions.

DSS should also consider a redesign of audit structures to identify/mitigate operational risks. For instance, a lack of internal controls regarding accessibility within the Louisiana Automated Management Information (L'AMI) system, which maintains food stamp case information, puts DSS at risk for employee fraud. Additionally, DSS has received repeat audit findings related to the administration of funds in the child care cluster. The existing controls within the current audit structure have failed to ensure adherence to departmental policies and state regulations. These controls were not sufficient to prevent and/or detect fraudulent activity from occurring within programs.

In all, we find that DSS has done an admirable job of focusing its efforts on serving its core functions. There is little "mission drift" or expansion beyond the core that is evident in DSS. However, expansion that has taken place in recent times has stretched the capacities of program staff and diluted DSS resources to a large extent. In addition, many processes and administrative functions have been decentralized beyond the point of inefficiency and create confusion among staff, clients and vendors. For instance, contracts are written multiple times for the same vendor with different terms, for instance. Payment inconsistencies occur on a regular basis. Clients find it necessary to provide the same information to multiple units within DSS. DSS is in dire need of process and program modernization that will in turn reduce many of the difficulties faced in providing clients effective and efficient services and assistance.

Strategic Recommendations

- **Modernize and realign business operations and program practices, including Informational Technology functions like service integration, program enrollment, provider/payment management, electronic case management and paperless process.**
- **Produce cost savings, streamline operations, improve program performance and better utilize and leverage internal and external resources including non-state general fund resources by ensuring continuous improvement processes align with business needs and priorities and ensuring that DSS programming is outcomes-driven and evidence-based.**
- **Streamline administrative and service support operations through centralization and/or outsourcing appropriate functions to community-based organizations and/or private industry. Outsourcing may include allowing internal departments flexibility to restructure and redesign their own workflow processes so that they may compete with others to continue operations that meet specified outcomes.**
- **Collaborate and leverage resources with state agencies for partnership in poverty reduction programs that rely heavily on workforce training and supports and paths to high school graduation.**
- **Modernize approach to client care/intervention by discarding the "one-size fits all" approach and instead match the type and level of intervention to the service needed.**
- **Reform the system of residential treatment services for children who are in or at risk of being placed in residential treatment with a focus on meaningful licensing standards, service delivery on the residential level of care, clear criteria for placement and analyzing reimbursement and fee structure, service treatment to determine the range of services and models for population needs, and Office of Community Services administration of residential treatment.**
- **Provide Child Protective Services with the tools needed to ensure the quality care of children**
- **Continue to invest in early childhood development through Child Care Quality and other resources.**
- **Remove barriers to access services and resources.**
- **Develop a DSS Customer Service Center that serves as a single point of contact/reporting, a client and provider resource, and a case triage management center to ensure a seamless entry into the DSS system as well as many other functions**

- **Expand feedback from staff, clients and providers.**
- **Integrate service delivery.**
- **Redesign the Disaster Food Stamp Program and integrate into emergency preparedness.**
- **Create a unified long-term plan for fulfilling the ESF-6 mission.**
- **Ensure that citizens have confidence that they will be protected from harm, have appropriate shelter and supportive services, and have the opportunity to return home as quickly as possible.**
- **Continue to convene regular stakeholder forums and expands survey work of staff, clients, and providers.**
- **Work to reduce poverty by leveraging collaborations with partners, focusing on high-impact, evidence-based educational programming and workforce support collaborations.**
- **Reduce the incidence and impact of fraud and abuse by ensuring continuous improvement processes align with business needs and priorities.**

We have noted that Louisiana faces many challenges, especially among its most vulnerable populations. Economic downturns such as the one we currently face affect vulnerable families the most. DSS recognizes that Louisiana faces difficult economic conditions in the near future at the very least. DSS is committed to improving the effectiveness of its programs in meeting goals and expected outcomes and increasing operational efficiencies that will see significant cost savings while avoiding service reductions to the greatest extent possible. To that end, we provide the following strategic recommendations.

Modernization

DSS Goal: Modernize and realign business operations and program practices.
By ensuring continuous improvement processes align with business needs and priorities and ensuring that DSS programming is outcome-driven and evidence-based, DSS will produce cost savings, streamline operations, improve

program performance, and better utilize and leverage internal and external resources including leveraging and/or securing additional non-state general fund resources.

Business Operations

As indicated in our findings, DSS business processes are antiquated, costly and do not provide quality customer services. Current business processes do not ensure that the agency's operations are efficient and accountable, often resulting in wasteful and sometimes improper utilization of resources. A key strategy to remedy this situation is found in DSS's modernization of IT functions that includes:

- Service Integration
- Program Enrollment
- Provider/Payment Management
- Electronic Case Management
- Paperless Process

It is expected that technology solutions in these functions will increase citizen access to benefits and services, create work efficiencies for staff, eliminate manual and redundant processes and tasks, and promote the accurate and timely delivery of benefits.

DSS can significantly streamline and achieve more efficient administrative and service support operations through centralization and/or outsourcing appropriate functions to community-based organizations and/or private industry. Our community-based organization partners experience the same increase in need during economic downturns.

Investment in their expertise and resources makes sense in many cases. These organizations bring value to our existing services and offer creative, feasible solutions for best serving our clients. For instance, such partnerships, because of broader knowledge of our clients, can increase access to DSS initiatives such as Individual Development Accounts, Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Quality Child Care.

“In addition to modernizing *how* the Department conducts business operations, it is recommended that the Department modernizes *what* interventions/programs are funded by ensuring that DSS programming is outcomes driven and evidenced-based.”

“Outsourcing” may also include a process of encouraging and allowing internal departments the flexibility to restructure and redesign their own workflow processes so that they may compete with others to continue operations that meet specified outcomes. Specific areas that present centralization or outsource opportunities include audit related functions, contract administrations, human resources functions, payment management, clerical pools, and training (especially of child protection investigations and family services case workers, support enforcement field staff, food stamp field staff, and TANF field staff).

TANF administration and case management functions provide even more opportunity for contracting to appropriate external vendors. Privatization of welfare administrative functions has increased greatly in recent years. Nationally in 2001, the U.S. General Accounting Office estimates that state and local governments contracted with nongovernmental agencies about 13 percent of all federal and state maintenance of effort expenditures for TANF administration and services. While all aspects of TANF administration have been privatized, employment related case management processing and TANF eligibility determination are increasingly outsourced through pay for performance contracts with nongovernmental agencies.

The current economic downturn in Louisiana (and nationally) poses additional challenges to transforming an already stretched system. As the economic environment worsens at a local level, the need for DSS services increases. In addition to cutting costs through eliminating multiple program redundancies and improving process efficiencies, DSS is well suited to maximize and leverage existing and potential non-state financing options. Historically, DSS has been dependent on core federal and state dollars. These resources are critically important and will be realigned to better meet existing state needs. Many nontraditional ‘social service’ federal financing options (e.g. Medicaid) have not been fully explored and maximized to reduce and/or expand the state’s current investment. For instance, DSS and the Office of Juvenile Justice currently spend more than \$19 million in state general funds for mental health services for children and families, with very little

matched by the federal Medicaid program. With almost all of Louisiana’s low-income children insured through LaCHIP, DSS is confident that a significant savings can be achieved by an alignment with the Medicaid program. It is incumbent upon DSS to leverage every available funding stream, expand DSS resource development activities, and diversify funding streams for proven interventions.

DSS should continue to actively pursue collaborations and leverage resources with other state agencies specifically for partnership in poverty reduction programs that rely heavily on workforce training and supports and paths to high school graduation (e.g. Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), the Department of Economic Development (LED), and the Department of Education (DoE)). This will include close partnerships with LRS to ensure our citizens with disabilities have enhanced opportunities to obtain gainful employment and remain productive members of their communities. Broad-based efforts of collaboration with State partners may include co-location of offices, coordinated training opportunities and the development of models to ensure better leveraging of resources for agencies providing similar services to similar populations.

Program Practices

In addition to modernizing *how* DSS conducts business operations, it is recommended that DSS modernizes *what* interventions/programs are funded by ensuring that DSS programming is outcomes driven and evidenced-based. DSS funds a variety of programs to address the varied needs of clients. However, these programs do not always take into consideration the level of care/intervention needed for the individual client. Typically a “one-size fits all” approach is used. Research has consistently shown that matching the type of intervention to the service need is key to producing long-term positive outcomes for children and families. DSS, in policy and program planning must also consider not only the intervention “fit” but both the short and long-term outcomes of interventions and strategies. For instance, we know that investment in quality child care serves a short-term function of supporting employment. It also is a primary driver of long-term success for the child. Much of the needed outcomes tracking will rely on

updated technologies as well as national/industry benchmarking.

This approach will assist DSS in maximizing program investments. TANF resources for instance, may be streamlined in quantity and optimized in quality to address poverty reduction

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and increase educational and workforce supports programs based on proven interventions and supported by performance-based contracts and automated program monitoring. This also allows DSS some policy remedy within TANF reform itself. We know that as a whole, mandatory work related activities administered under specific policy guidelines decrease welfare use, increase employment, increase earnings, and decrease poverty. There

are policy options within TANF that, when optimized on cost/benefit terms, allow us to promote and support work more effectively including:

- Adopting appropriate requirements on work and limiting eligibility (such as enrollment time limits, post enrollment work activity requirements, pre-enrollment job activity requirements, etc.)
- Creating and optimizing effective financial incentives to work (such as expanded Earned Income Tax Credit, asset limits, Individual Development Accounts, microenterprise development, etc)
- Providing only the most effective services supporting work (such as subsidized child care, employer tax credits, tailored family support services, etc.)

In part because of spending down previous years' surplus, projected budget shortfalls in the future, and more importantly due to a renewed DSS focus on outcomes based investments, DSS can take this opportunity to realign TANF

resources to specifically achieve improved outcomes in poverty reduction and family stability through targeting investments in proven interventions. This will require that DSS identify high impact programming currently in place in Louisiana and nationally, establish performance measures and benchmarks for DSS and providers (through performance based contracts), and regularly assess investments for their contribution to improved or declining outcome measures.

Children and Families

DSS Goal: Promoting and supporting safe and thriving children and families.

By providing integrated prevention and intervention services to reduce the risk of child abuse, neglect and the occurrence of out of home placements; and by implementing a reformed system of care for children at risk of and/or receiving residential services; and by improving emergency preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation capacities, DSS will more effectively ensure the safety and security of the children and families we serve.

Child Safety and Supports

Of utmost importance, we recommend that the system of residential treatment services for those children who are at risk of/or in residential treatment be reformed with a focus on: meaningful licensing standards; service delivery on the residential level of care; clear criteria for placement and analyzing reimbursement and fee structure; service treatment to determine the range of services and models for population needs; and OCS administration of residential treatment (RFP process, outcome measurements and performance based contracts).

The need to keep our children safe and protected also drives the recommendation to redesign Child Protective Services to allow for modern technology integration and utilization (laptops and voice recognition software, GPS capacities, etc) for case documentation (timeliness and accuracy), and staff safety and training. This is specifically important in the training and retention of child protection investigation and family services case workers. These workers must receive extensive initial orientation and training in the tools and methods of their work as well as ongoing, intensive training

and learning opportunities that will allow them to develop professionally and better serve the children and families of Louisiana.

One of the key recommendations that directly impacts clients as well as partners, advocates and others across all service areas is the development of a DSS Customer Service Center that serves as a single point of contact/reporting, a client and provider resource, and a case triage management center to ensure a seamless entry into the DSS system as well as many other functions. This is especially important for managing client intakes/needs that may cross DSS and/or state agency functions and “levels” of crisis or need.

It is also recommended that DSS continue to support Child Care Quality through incentives for quality child care. 2008 is the first year in Louisiana that child care providers with a “star rating” can qualify for a tax credit. Parents and employees in quality child care centers also are eligible for tax credits. This is an emerging but proven reform effort in early childhood investments. DSS must continue to prioritize enrollment of centers into the quality system.

Emergency Preparedness

In the wake of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, DSS has recognized that successful emergency preparedness and response strategies require

“[During an emergency], the Department wants to ensure that citizens have confidence that they will be protected from harm, have appropriate shelter and supportive services, and be provided the opportunity to return to their homes as quickly as possible.”

strong collaborative efforts between the state, evacuating and sheltering parishes, the federal government and nongovernmental organizations. Since the hurricanes, DSS has worked closely with stakeholders including local officials, vendors, interest groups and past

evacuees, to provide a more in-depth, long-term plan for the next hurricane season.

In developing a proactive and comprehensive approach to anticipating the needs and providing solutions to support, citizens, particularly the elderly, persons with disabilities, and families with young children, DSS wants to ensure that

citizens have confidence in the system that they will be protected from harm, have appropriate shelter and supportive services, and be provided the opportunity to return to their homes as quickly as possible. From a short-term perspective, DSS is focused on improvement of key components in the state run Critical Transportation Needs Shelters (CTNS). These are:

- Registering Evacuees - Improve evacuee registration through streamlined data entry processes (manual and electronic) and ensuring registration at American Red Cross shelters is integrated with the state’s registration system.
 - Shelter Capacity – Increasing in-state shelter capacity and prioritize or stagger shelter usage based on shelter suitability and increasing comfort and safety while better managing logistics.
 - Shelter Standards - Apply modified American Red Cross standards and equip shelters with adequate pre-staged supplies and services.
 - Delivery of Services – Efficiently deliver services through single point of vendor contact, improved inventory management and controls.
 - Human Services – Better coordinate with government and nongovernmental partners to provide services for special needs populations including enhanced physical and behavioral health services.
 - Management/Staffing Structure – Coordinate and strengthen decision making and “on the ground” management of shelters including improved partnerships with all stakeholders to meet immediate needs.
 - Communications – Improved access local information through partners and phone banks while increasing monitoring of local and national weather media through television and radio
- These short-term improvements to the state’s sheltering plan will allow DSS to work with our partners to prioritize the next steps that can be implemented to develop a long-term, unified interagency plan.

To assist DSS in preparing for future emergencies, it is recommended that the Disaster Food Stamp program be redesigned so that the need for large physical sites and waiting times while applying for disaster food stamps is greatly reduced. Administration of Disaster Food Stamp Programs traditionally rely on an in-person in-

interview and issuance of an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. New technologies currently being evaluated will route applicants to an online pre-registration and eligibility determination to minimize the in-person work effort needed.

Self-Sufficiency

DSS: Encouraging and supporting individuals moving into self sufficiency.

By working to reduce poverty through leveraging collaborations with internal and external partners to focus resources on high impact, evidence-based educational programming; and by focusing resources on high impact, evidence-based support collaborations, DSS will significantly contribute to individuals' economic stability and self sufficiency.

Collaboration and Resource Leveraging

DSS should continue to work closely with the Louisiana Workforce Commission and other partners through "One Stop Shops" and other strategies to further collaborate. For instance, DSS currently provides vocational rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities who are seeking to obtain or maintain employment and/or independence and employers seeking skilled workers. Currently, about 29,000 clients are served statewide. Examples of needed collaborations include cross-training of staff regarding the services provided by each of the agencies; improving the understanding of other agencies and physicians regarding the referral and service delivery processes; increasing awareness of LRS presence in the community; transition services and increasing employment services to include more placement assistance and more supported employment with longer/closer follow along.

Another avenue to leverage resources for the purpose of improving staff capacities/turnover/support (thus better protecting our children) is to work with partners to develop an OCS-University Training Consortium (collaboration with public universities of social work in Louisi-

ana and best practice consultants/representatives from Kentucky) that builds upon existing partnerships to more effectively link and leverage human/financial resources to support a high quality, integrated, outcomes-focused child welfare learning and professional development system.

It is also recommended that the structure and implementation of the Strategies To Empower People (STEP) program, created in 2001, be updated. After the implementation of STEP, caseloads plummeted, but this reduction is not directly attributable to the success of the STEP program but rather national economic trends. This program holds tremendous opportunities for our poor and working poor populations, including non-custodial fathers and single mothers who need assistance getting on and moving up the career ladder. The STEP contracts should integrate payments/bonuses for providers who can assist clients in securing and maintaining work, as well as increases in wages.

Proven Solutions

By utilizing modern technologies, DSS could not only see cost savings but also realize higher

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quality services for children through implementing a system of electronic billing and time and attendance invoicing in its Child Care Assistance programming. Currently, child care providers seek reimbursement for Child Care Assistance

Payments (CCAP) from DSS for services via a manual, paper-based invoicing system. This system is ripe with opportunities for fraud and human errors.

To help ensure children are receiving financial support and reduce dependence on governmental assistance, it is also suggested that DSS focus development and efficiency efforts in Support Enforcement Services (SES). At the federal level, SES performance is intertwined with the TANF block grant, with the understanding that as states vigorously pursue support from parents, the dependence on governmental benefits is reduced. Louisiana SES missed the

performance threshold for the Paternity Establishment Percentage (PEP) for federal fiscal year 2008. For every \$1 spent in SES administrative costs, Louisiana collects \$4.64 in child support. If this threshold is not met again in FFY 2009, Louisiana will be assessed a penalty in the TANF block grant.

Welfare reform brought significant investments in single mothers transitioning into the workforce. Similar investments for non-custodial fathers have not been made; yet research demonstrates a working, contributing father is more likely to be engaged with his children. Louisiana must increase its investment in non-custodial fathers to assist in their support of children. It is recommended that in partnership with the LWC, Department of Corrections and the DoE, DSS may develop fatherhood initiatives that are designed to engage fathers, reduce citizen dependency on family assistance programs and support educational and workforce opportunities.

Customer Satisfaction

DSS Goal: Improving customer service through staff productivity and satisfaction.

Through modernization and efficiency and by promoting a culture that values our customers, employees and partners, DSS will see measurable improvements in customer service and staff productivity.

It is worth reiterating here the need for DSS to develop a central Customer Service Center that will help to ensure a seamless delivery of services and point of entry for clients, advocates, providers and partners, and provide consistent response 24/7. The Center could serve as a resource to track client status in the DSS system of services (application, signatures, etc). Customer service at all levels will be greatly improved through a single point of contact with appropriate referrals and resources available.

It is also recommended that DSS continue expanding through on-going communication to staff, clients and stakeholders for recommendations on how we may provide more effective and efficient services. The newly redesigned DSS website will likely serve a valuable role in optimizing stakeholder communications and knowledge.

DSS recognizes that in order to significantly improve DSS outcomes and improve service to our clients and the state, we must attract and retain highly-qualified employees through sustained efforts in recruiting, training, career growth opportunities and succession planning. It is through these efforts that the framework for employee success will enable DSS to meet the performance expectations of both internal and external customers.

Fraud and Abuse

DSS Goal: Reducing fraud and abuse

By ensuring continuous improvement processes align with business needs and priorities, DSS can make great strides in reducing the incidence and impact of fraud and abuse within its systems.

While in large part a function of IT modernization, strategies to reduce DSS fraud and abuse also require a commitment to understanding why and how these activities have continued through time and taking appropriate management steps to ensure the environment changes as well.

Recommendations for reducing fraud and abuse include: Implementing a secure process to ensure that the execution of quality control and oversight measures are conducted on a routine, random basis; improving policies and procedures relating to employee accessibility to processing applications for staff, family members and close friends; and, strengthening human resources policies to allow for immediate suspension and/or termination of employee substantiations of fraudulent activities.

Additional recommended steps include redesigning the review and monitoring process to ensure provider reimbursement requests are accurate and supported by appropriate documentation and enacting a system to sanction providers who are not in compliance with program regulations.

Moving forward

The design of an evidence-based, integrated service delivery system requires a statewide collaborative, citizen-focused approach to achieve long-term goals and improve the quality of life of families and children. The current service delivery system is fragmented and requires our citizens to enter several “doors” to receive services that meet their needs. DSS will develop a process to encourage health, educational, employment, correctional and social service agencies to integrate, communicate and collaborate and bring individual parts together to address the holistic needs of our citizens. This may include the development of legislation and policies that support integration and collaboration between the various entities.

Although the goal is to provide services and supports to ensure safety of our most vulnerable citizens and move families and individuals into self-sufficiency, there currently is no formalized structure to ensure they are receiving all the appropriate services to meet this goal. DSS will necessarily develop structural and functional reforms and realignment along the most effective means of serving the complex stages of need that our clients present. Realigning departmental structure around functional service access and delivery will allow for a leaner and more responsive organization that implements programs in a more efficient and cost-effective manner.

Moving forward, DSS will develop outcomes related directly to the goals we have set forth and commit to making operational and programmatic decisions that support these outcomes. This will happen through critically examining existing programs and objectives and defining how they individually serve DSS’s goals. This will allow us to put in place measurable, reliable and valid performance indicators.

Concurrently, a catalog of best practices and national or industry benchmarks will be developed to assist DSS in identifying the most effective interventions that best contribute to our stated outcomes.

Internally, DSS will examine its core competencies and how they most effectively serve the functions that are needed to meet DSS’s goals.

This may mean structural realignment for DSS along organizational functions that serve different stages of client needs from the immediate safety of clients through transitioning individuals and families into self sufficiency.

An emphasis on customer service will be a defining focus of the transformation. Customer service for those seeking or receiving programmatic services will be centralized and more accessible. The design and implementation of a call center staffed by program generalists will serve as the primary point of entry for citizens and allow those receiving services easy access to information and referral services, streamline the intake process and provide timely resolution of issues.

This realignment also includes a realignment of external partnerships, both formal and informal. These partnerships include governmental agencies, community organizations, stakeholders and contracted providers. Existing partnerships with governmental agencies will be strengthened based upon the new organizing principles and service delivery systems of DSS.

Particular attention will be paid during the process to best practice standards and lessons learned from other organizations that have undertaken transformations of a similar nature and scope. These lessons will help DSS avoid missteps along the way and encourage employee engagement. Perhaps the most important lesson, according to those who have undertaken such transformations is the value of open and honest communication with employees regarding the process and expectations tied to the transformation process.

DSS is committed to reaching out to staff, clients and all stakeholders for ideas and recommendations on how we may provide more effective and efficient services.

A series of focus groups will be held around the state over the coming weeks with stakeholders, citizens, advocacy groups and legislators to allow for public input of the audit findings and feedback regarding the structure and organization of DSS. This will allow for transparency, ensure accountability, increase public trust and assist with transforming the agency’s image.

In addition, DSS will soon convene a meeting of the Advisory Council on Health Care: Social Services Group for Governor Jindal's Transition Report to review DSS's audit findings and recommendations. DSS will continue to seek advice and guidance from the Social Services Advisory Council as we move forward in transforming DSS's delivery of services.

A web-based survey was sent to all DSS employees asking for their opinions on issues from employee satisfaction to challenges facing the Agency. More than 50 percent of 5000+ employees of DSS completed the survey, with results being tabulated by Office, as well as by agency as a whole.

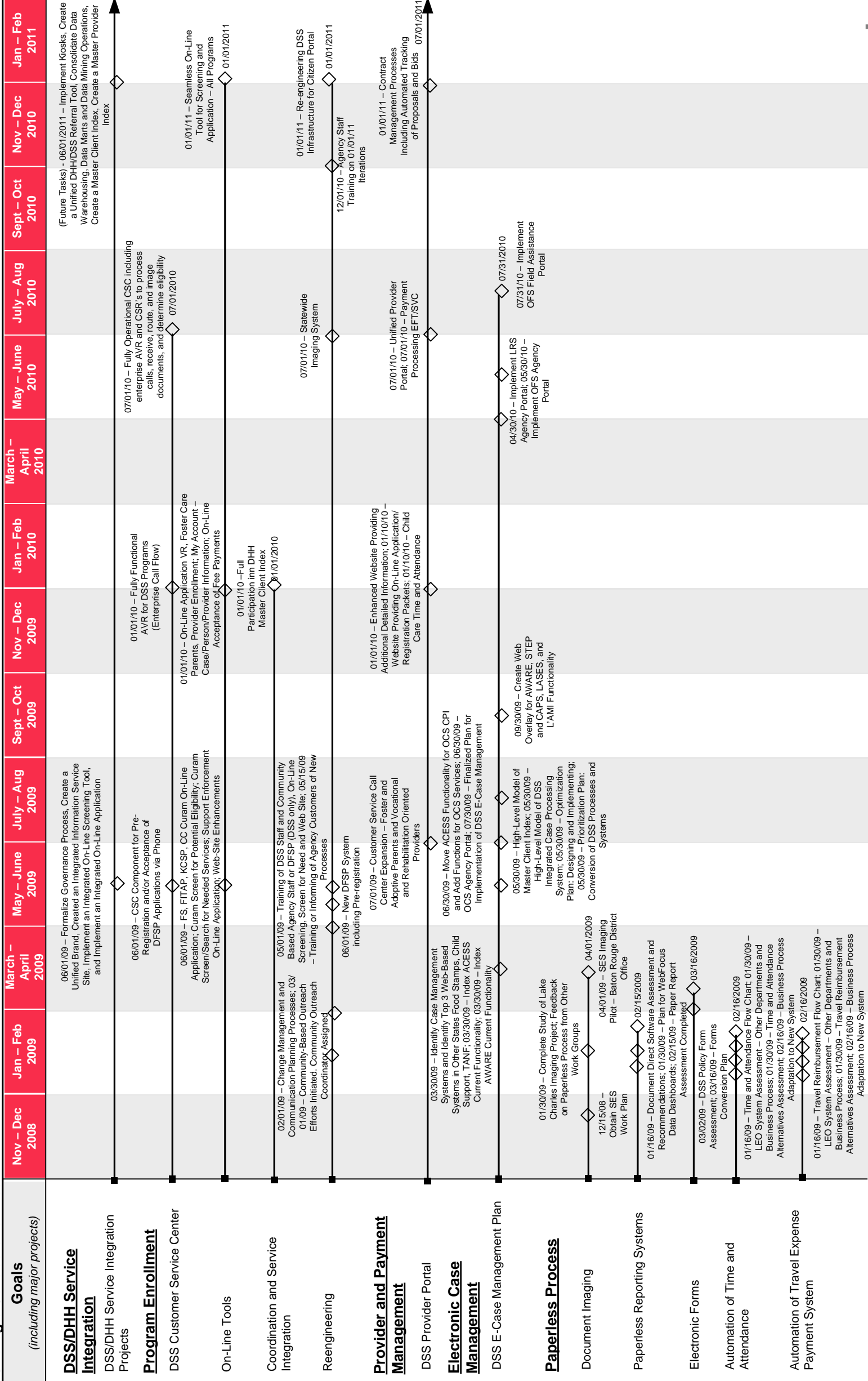
Results of the survey found that opinions were consistent among offices, with caseload management and staff morale being identified as the greatest challenge facing DSS, and salary and caseload management being identified as issues for employees. Employees felt that while DSS was flexible with employee's family responsibilities and received support from their supervisors, they felt that their opinions were not valued as they should be, that additional training is needed to help them do their jobs effectively and that the agency could be run in a more cost-efficient manner. Overall, employees expressed that they were satisfied with their jobs and DSS as a whole, but feel that technol-

ogy and better communication need to be improved.

DSS recognizes that innovative ideas on how to improve efficiencies, outcomes and further integrate a service delivery system are not exclusive to any one person or team within DSS. DSS will introduce a newly created innovation award to encourage great ideas and innovation from staff and partners throughout the state. The award will recognize and reward individuals and groups of individuals for their ideas on how to better serve our mission.

DSS currently serves its mission through a large variety of programs and services across DSS program offices, state agencies, local non-profits and providers. While the majority of DSS programs are connected to the DSS vision and goals, there is a need to intensely focus programming across the board towards outcomes-based, systemic interventions that produce significant program results, efficiencies and cost-savings. This will require a focus on what works, on DSS's core mission and high impact interventions and policy remedies that will allow DSS to perform more effectively and efficiently. This report has argued for the significant organizational change that will be needed for DSS to do just this, successfully transform the service delivery system for the social and economic well being of our clients and the state.

Strategic Collaboration Team



Key

- Activity in progress
- Activity Start
- Activity End
- On-going Activity
- Milestone Completed
- Milestone Delayed
- Scheduled Milestone
- Completed Delayed Milestone
- Delayed Milestone
- New Milestone Completed
- New Milestone
- Milestone Completed Early
- Milestone Moved Forward
- Completed Milestone on Schedule