

**REPORT
 HIGHLIGHTS**
 PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Subject

This report reviews DES' efforts in implementing its service integration initiative. The initiative is a major attempt to restructure DES' approach for delivering services, to improve outcomes for families served, and to maximize services.

Our Conclusion

DES' efforts, which are in the beginning stages, appear to mirror efforts in other states and reflect an understanding of key success factors as identified in research literature. Executive staff and managers support the initiative, preliminary work is under way to address information-sharing issues, and DES is making organizational changes to improve services. Next, DES needs to identify measurable outcomes to evaluate the success of its efforts.



2005

**DES Should Take
 Steps To Ensure the
 Success of Service
 Integration**

Although no widely accepted definition of service integration exists, DES defines it as a service delivery model that helps programs meet families' needs through a more holistic, strengths-based approach, focusing on both coordination of department programs and on strengthening relationships with community partners.

DES faces a significant challenge in integrating its services because it involves six different divisions, each with its own set of services, eligibility requirements, funding sources, information systems, and office locations. However, DES' efforts so far appear to reflect an understanding of key success factors and potential barriers to success as identified in research literature.

Strong management support—A recent multi-state case study suggests that strong leaders who plan and are willing to push for reform may be the single most important factor in affecting an integration effort's outcome.

DES' executives and managers appear strongly committed to service integration and are taking steps to communicate that message. As one step, they have developed a video on service integration to be shown to every current and new employee.

Dealing with "silo" funding—Because funding mechanisms are set up on a



Services Provided by DES' Divisions

1. **Aging and Community Service (DACS)**—Administers programs that serve at-risk and older adults.
2. **Benefits and Medical Eligibility (DBME)**—Provides welfare services such as food stamps and cash assistance.
3. **Child Support Enforcement (DCSE)**—Enforces child support obligations.
4. **Children, Youth and Families (DCYF)**—Manages child protective services.
5. **Developmental Disabilities (DDD)**—Administers programs for persons who have autism, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, or mental retardation.
6. **Employment and Rehabilitation Services (DERS)**—Administers work-related programs including counseling, training, rehabilitation, job placement, and recruiting.

program-by-program (silo) basis, funding represents a barrier to service integration. Much of DES' funding comes from federal program grants that narrowly define the target populations, limiting DES' flexibility with regard to the funding. However, DES has established a team to help programs address funding-related issues and is developing a tool kit for field offices to use in integrating services. Among other things, the tool kit will

include information on how to allocate costs for shared resources.

Addressing information-sharing issues—

According to research, sharing information is a critical issue in integrating services. For example, for a staff person to deliver integrated services to clients involved in a variety of programs, he or she needs to be able to access client information from all of the programs. However, DES' current information systems are based on 1970s and 1980s technology, and each program's information system operates independently.

Other states' experiences indicate that developing systems to share information takes years and requires large expenditures. Nebraska spent \$58 million over 7 years to develop such a system; Texas and California are both developing systems, and each state reports spending over \$250 million thus far. Texas projects it will take 7 years and California projects it will take at least 10 years to complete its systems.

New Web-based technology offers an opportunity to provide for integrated information systems. Until a new Web-based information system can be developed to replace its mainframe-based system, DES is working on developing software to help it retrieve information from the various systems, and a central information file from which staff can obtain client information from multiple systems.

Attracting and retaining qualified

employees—Integrating services requires staff to learn new skills and new attitudes. For example, El Paso County, Colorado, found that it needed to replace many staff who transferred to different jobs rather than learn new skills and attitudes required to deliver integrated services. Like other state agencies, DES has difficulty finding and keeping qualified staff. DES will also need to address new

staff qualifications, additional training needs, and potential issues such as salary differences between programs.

Initial Efforts To Coordinate and Improve Services

DES has taken several steps to integrate services, including encouraging offices to explore ways to coordinate services, forming special family connection teams, and collaborating with community groups.

Encouraging offices to coordinate

services—In 2003, DES encouraged offices that house multiple programs at one location to improve service coordination. DES did not mandate how to do this, but allowed the offices to determine what would work best for them and their customers. Two offices, located in Phoenix and Tucson, integrated their TANF and Jobs programs. They established a new customer service representative who assesses customers' needs and directs them to the appropriate services. The Phoenix site also added a child support caseworker on-site to help its TANF applicants obtain child support. These integrated offices should continue to share experiences and ideas with other local offices to facilitate their development of successful service integration initiatives. Other offices have looked at changes these offices have made. Two other Tucson offices have now reorganized their offices. Casa Grande, Yuma, and Show Low have started to look at reorganizing their offices.

Family connection teams—DES also established two family connection teams located in Phoenix and Tucson, in 2005. These teams focus on families at risk of entering the child welfare system who might benefit from intensive services. Both teams were allowed to identify their own priorities for services, but both have focused on Kinship Care families—usually grandparents who are raising a grandchild—because these families can

be under a lot of stress. The Phoenix team also focuses on families involved in dependency court and domestic violence shelters, while the Tucson team also partners with schools in specific zip codes.

If a team determines that a family needs services, it is authorized to make immediate benefit determinations, in contrast to DES' normal approval process, which can take from 30 to 45 days.

Collaborating with stakeholders—DES seeks community input through several key community groups such as the Economic Security Advisory Council and new Community Network Teams (CNT), which were established as part of the Governor's 2003 child protection system reform action plan. Members of a CNT include representatives from state agencies, community providers, families, educators, tribes, courts, victim advocates, faith-based and philanthropic organizations, and businesses. The CNTs hold regular meetings to discuss how the State and communities can work together to better serve their customers.

DES is also piloting a project at six homeless shelters. This initiative involves a DES caseworker going to shelters to help homeless TANF applicants and recipients with tasks such as filling out DES documents and completing paternity affidavits. Eventually, DES would like to train shelter staff to develop and complete a single employment plan that meets shelters' and the federal Jobs program's requirements.

DES should plan to evaluate outcomes—DES should learn from its previous service integration efforts, establish comprehensive outcome measures, and evaluate outcomes of its current initiative. Research shows that evaluating the impact of service integration initiatives helps to solve problems, can help to request modifications, and can assess whether and how to expand programs. DES has attempted service integration projects in the past and should examine those efforts to identify barriers that led to ending those efforts. It should then apply any lessons learned to its current initiative. While DES has identified some tools to evaluate client outcomes and its own system outcomes, it needs to expand and continue these efforts.

Recommendations

DES should:

- Continue to share experiences and ideas from local office initiatives.
- Identify and make plans to overcome the barriers to success encountered by past efforts.
- Identify measurable outcomes and evaluate the success of service integration efforts.

TO OBTAIN
MORE INFORMATION

A copy of the full report
can be obtained by calling
(602) 553-0333



or by visiting
our Web site at:
www.auditorgen.state.az.us

Contact person for
this report:
Shan Hays