

**Coalition for Access and Opportunity Webinar**  
***Lessons from the Work Support Strategies Initiative***  
Thursday, October 16, 2014

**Q&A**

**Q: Is there a way to get more details/specifics on the policy changes that have been suggested/made in the WSS states?**

Colorado

- Colorado aligned the dates they re-evaluate customers' eligibility for programs so families who participate in multiple programs will update eligibility information at one time instead of multiple times. This means less duplicative processing for staff and less disruption for customers.

Idaho

- Idaho successfully built their first self-service portal for customers.
- Idaho reported that they used a WSS-inspired program integration approach in designing their system enhancements funded by the ACA 90/10 match, focusing on the best decisions for Idaho families across individual programs rather than using a single-program lens. With the WSS framework in mind, Idaho designed a more integrated re-evaluation process for Medicaid as well as CHIP, SNAP and TANF, and enhanced their electronic records for customer information.
- Idaho has created an automated, "no-touch" re-evaluation process for Medicaid eligibility. By leveraging ACA functionality to check state and federal interfaces, the states will update some customers' Medicaid cases without requiring any paperwork or contact with customers. This saves state staff the time spent requesting and processing more paperwork for customers' information that the state and federal government already has access to electronically – and it helps ensure that no one's case is closed accidentally because staff don't have time to get to the review.

Illinois

- Using a strategy that federal officials made available to states following considerable input and information from the WSS TA team, Illinois used current SNAP eligibility to determine single-adult households eligible for Medicaid as part of the Medicaid expansion in Illinois. Through express enrollment, approximately 40,000 Illinois residents gained new medical coverage. In addition to the initial enrollment efforts, Illinois reviewed their pending medical applications and express enrolled a few additional thousand enrollees. This strategy means that these customers are not required to provide information that they have already submitted to the state.
- Recognizing the need for a comprehensive, statewide approach to customer service and managing daily operations, Illinois convened a workgroup consisting of local office staff throughout the state to work toward the goal of having standardized business processes. The goal is to ensure all offices provide a consistent level of customer service.

- On a monthly basis, community partners and advocates receive regular updates and opportunities to weigh in on the direction of the project. These meetings have ensured that the WSS initiative has strong support from community-based partners.
- From June 2012 to June 2013, Illinois exercised two sixth-month SNAP waivers granted by USDA FNS which allowed the state to extend the SNAP certification period for certain households. This policy brought important administrative relief to the FCRCs as evidenced by statewide SNAP application timeliness increasing steadily from 82% in March 2012 and to 92.2% in January 2013. With help from WSS technical assistance, Illinois also gained approval to implement an “express lane” for current SNAP recipients to enroll in Medicaid.

### North Carolina

- Staying loyal to their WSS vision, that families will tell their stories once and receive the services they need, North Carolina created an integrated application to reduce the need for customers to provide much of the same information to complete multiple applications. The new application includes the following health and human services programs: Medicaid, CHIP, Emergency Assistance, Child Care Assistance, Refugee Medical Assistance, and SNAP.
- Rhode Island has begun to phase in a major technology reform, which when complete will fully integrate health and human services programs into a completely new eligibility system. Rhode Island began processing Medicaid in the new system; by next year, SNAP, Child Care, and TANF will all be processed in the new integrated eligibility system.

### Rhode Island

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### South Carolina

- South Carolina also developed and obtained approval of a Document and Data Sharing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU outlined a more integrated service delivery model, allowing health and human services agencies to share documents and information.

### **Q: Can we get a list of the partners in Colorado involved in regional and state level policy changes that took place?**

Other advocates who work with CO DHS on WSS include:

- Hunger Free Colorado
- Colorado Center on Law & Policy
- Colorado Impact
- Family Resource Center Association

**Q: Did any WSS group discuss Child Support Pass Through or Child Support Enforcement as a work support?**

Although child support is not officially one of the work supports that Rhode Island included in its application, we have done some work on child support. Our Director of Child Support attends the Leadership Team and Advisory Committee meetings. We have discussed policy issues, including a proposal to no longer require that parents cooperate with child support enforcement for children for whom they are not requiring assistance (e.g., need child care assistance for a young child but don't want father of older child to be contacted for child support). Also, there are discussions underway about how to connect the child support data system with the system for the other human services program. It was in In Rhodes, our old legacy system, but is not yet part of the planned Eligibility System that will include Medicaid, SNAP, RI Works, and Child Care.

**Q: When will WSS start publishing comprehensive "wins" from these states, e.g. express lane eligibility in IL and SC?**

In early 2015, we will be posting regular updates on a new WSS website and will release reports later in the year.

**Q: Technology failures continue to plague government-supported programs beyond the massive glitches in the ACA federal exchange. What safeguards would be in place to correct computer errors and generally ensure access to services?**

Advocates need to be at the table when the state is planning technology reform. They need to ask questions and push for answers. Examples of issues to address before implementation include: how will the state process applications if the new technology fails and they don't launch new technology without a plan in place; how many errors are identified in the system during the testing phase; will the state postponing implementation until critical system errors are corrected and how do they classify critical errors; and, how will the state monitor progress to identify and address system issues at the earliest possible point.

Examples of key questions post implementation include: what is the process for identifying and addressing issues as they arise; how can advocates quickly communicate with state staff when we identify issues; ask for the data they are using to monitor progress; and, at times what seems like a new technology failure can be a training issues or adjustment period, ask whether they are identifying training needs and if they are providing follow-up training; and how frontline staff and managers are being supported in the transition.

**Q: What is happening in and around Illinois on such issues?**

Below is a link to the publicly available report on Illinois and a couple of highlights on their progress. This report is from 2011-12. To get an update on the most recent progress, Illinois DHS has a Social Services Advisory Council, a group of advocates and community leaders that advise the department on a wide range of issues and the Council has a Local Office Subcommittee that receives monthly updates on WSS progress. To learn who serves on the subcommittee and contact them directly with questions or if you're interested in joining the committee, you should reach out to Roshanda Jackson ([Roshanda.Jackson@illinois.gov](mailto:Roshanda.Jackson@illinois.gov)).

Illinois' Accomplishments

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initial enrollment efforts, Illinois reviewed their pending medical applications and express enrolled a few additional thousand enrollees. This strategy means that these customers are not required to provide information that they have already submitted to the state.

- Recognizing the need for a comprehensive, statewide approach to customer service and managing daily operations, Illinois convened a workgroup consisting of local office staff throughout the state to work towards the goal of having standardized business processes. The goal is to ensure all offices provide a consistent level of customer service.

For more information, visit: <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412792-Early-Lessons-from-the-Work-Support-Strategies-Initiative-Illinois.pdf>