



**Presentation to the  
Senate Health and Human Services Committee  
and Joint Committee on Oversight of the Health and  
Human Services Eligibility System**

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Health and Human Services Commission**

**September 8, 2010**

- I. Eligibility System Performance Update**
- II. Eligibility Staffing**
- III. SNAP Error Rates**
- IV. TIERS Rollout Status**
- V. Eligibility Business Process  
Improvements and Policy Changes**

# **I. Eligibility System Performance Update**

**In August 2010, Texas issued a total of \$433.49 million in SNAP benefits to more than 3.47 million recipients, compared to \$343.92 million and 2.8 million recipients in August 2009.**

- This is a one year increase of 26 percent in benefits and 23.9 percent in recipients.

## **Timeliness**

### • **SNAP Applications**

- Application timeliness increased to 93.5 percent in August, compared to 76.2 percent in March and 58.6 percent in September 2009.
  - Five out of ten regions had timeliness at or above 95 percent.

### • **SNAP Recertifications**

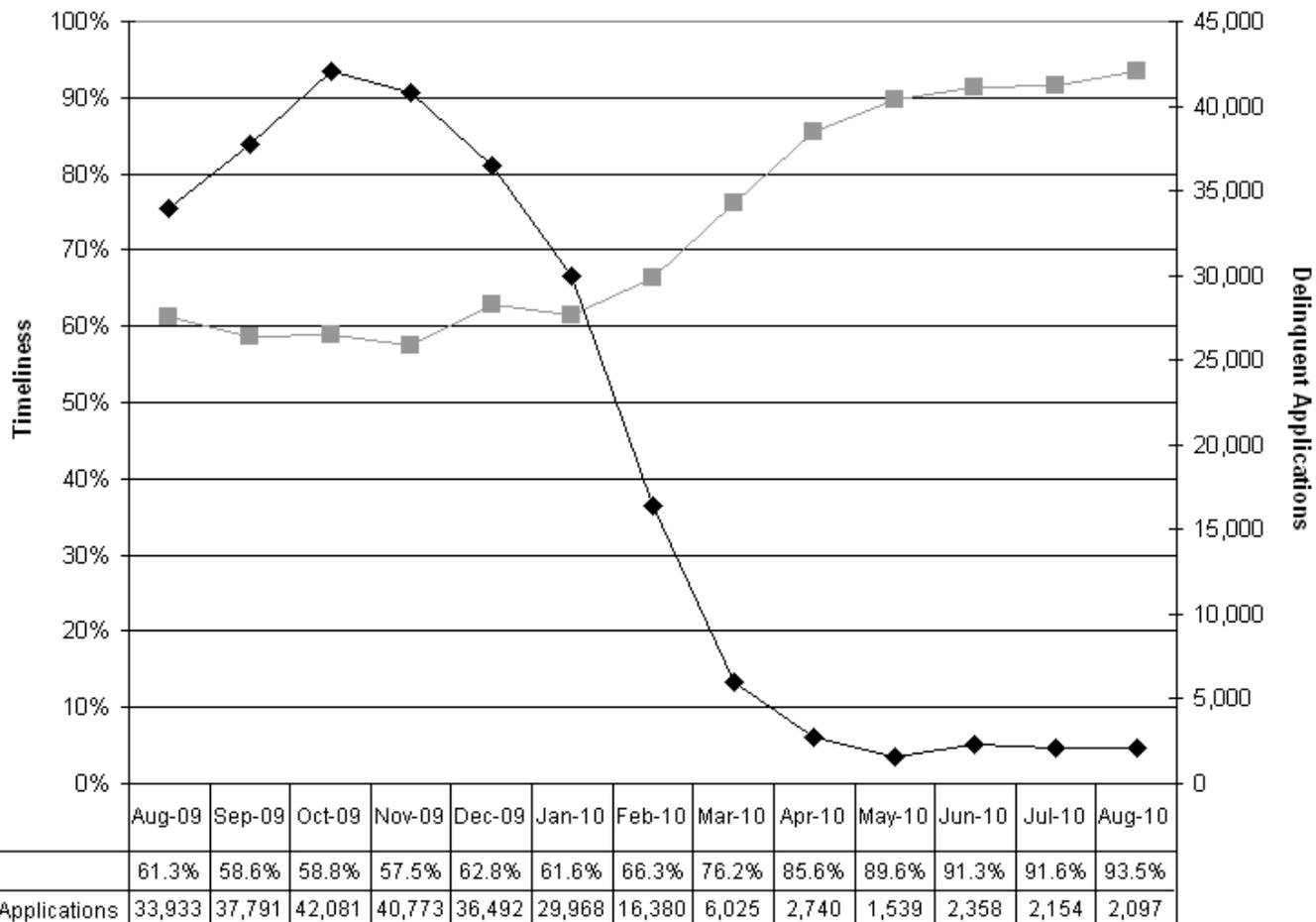
- Timeliness for recertifications increased to 95.8 percent in August, compared to 83.8 percent in March and 68.9 percent in September 2009.
  - Nine out of ten regions had timeliness at or above 95 percent.

### • **Expedited SNAP Application Timeliness**

- At the federal standard of seven days, timeliness for expedited applications was at 93.9 percent in August, compared to 89.5 percent in March and 89.4 percent in September 2009.
  - Seven out of ten regions had timeliness above 95 percent.
- At the state standard of one business day, timeliness for expedited applications was at 88.8 percent in August, compared to 80.0 percent in March and 76.6 percent in September 2009.

# Delinquent Applications and Timeliness

Statewide SNAP Application Timeliness Compared to  
Number of Delinquent SNAP Applications\*



\*For Number Delinquent, SAVERR cases only are reflected through May 2010. TIERS cases included effective June 2010.

**In August 2010, Texas had a total of 3.1 million individuals enrolled in Medicaid, compared to 2.8 million in August 2009.**

- This is a one year increase of 11.9 percent.

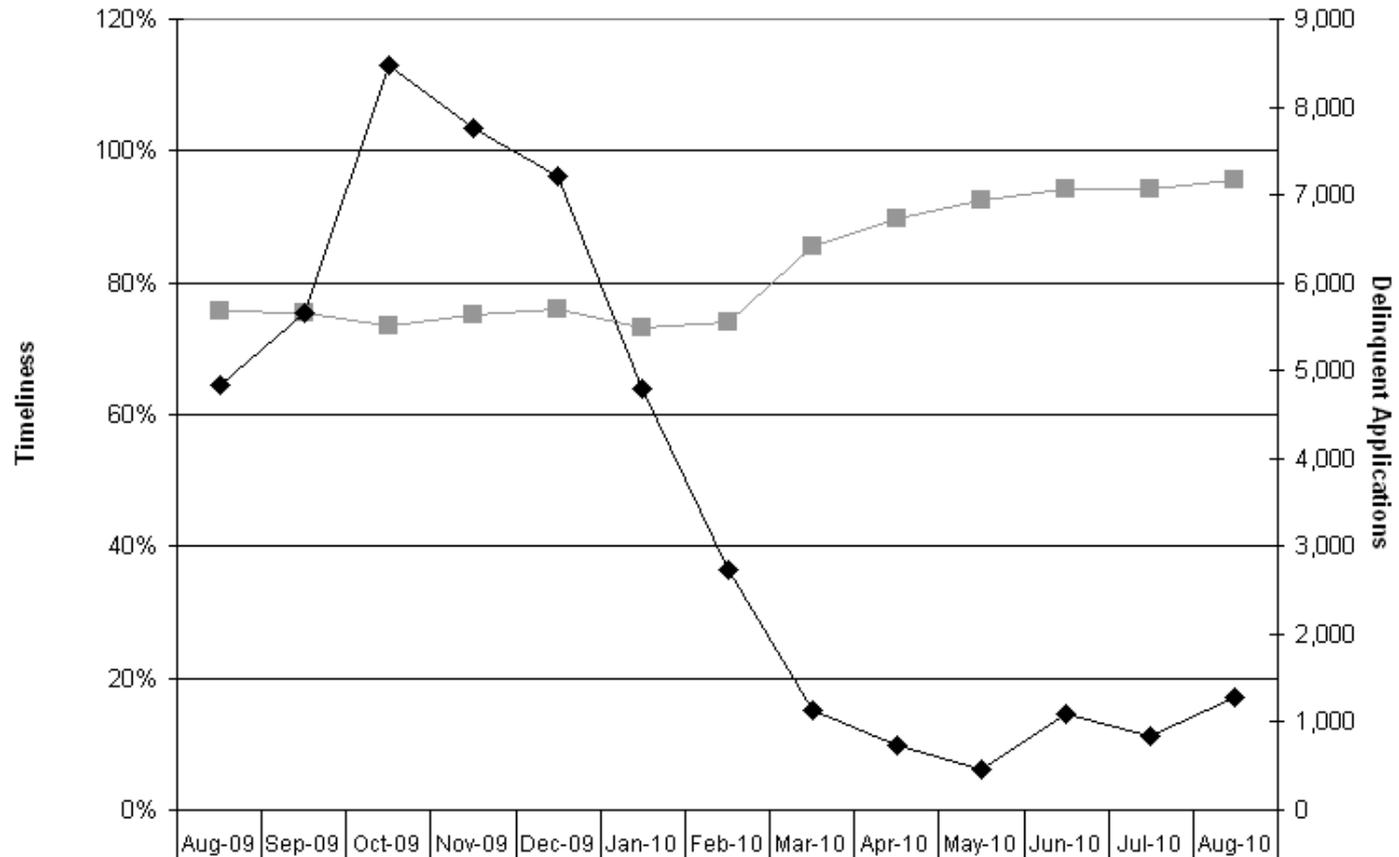
## **Timeliness**

- **Medicaid Applications**

- Application timeliness increased to 95.7 percent in August, compared to 76.2 percent in March and 75.4 percent in September 2009.

# Delinquent Medicaid Applications and Timeliness

Statewide Medicaid Application Timeliness Compared to Number of Delinquent Medicaid Applications\*



■ Timeliness	75.8%	75.4%	73.4%	75.1%	75.9%	73.2%	74.1%	85.4%	89.7%	92.5%	94.2%	94.1%	95.7%
◆ Delinquent Applications	4,830	5,647	8,471	7,765	7,215	4,787	2,744	1,128	746	463	1,096	836	1,288

\*For Number Delinquent, SAVERR cases only are reflected through May 2010. TIERS cases included effective June 2010.

## Lead time

- Lead time is a measurement used as an indicator of timeliness at the local office level. Lead time refers to the number of days between receipt of an application and the first available interview appointment.
  - The likelihood of an application being processed within 30 days is increased when lead time is at 20 days or less.
- Currently, all of HHSC's 314 eligibility offices have lead times of less than 20 days.
  - For the week ending July 23, a total of 215 offices had lead times of less than 8 days, 96 offices had lead times between 8 and 14 days, and 3 offices had lead times between 15 and 19 days.

## **II. Eligibility Staffing**

# Rider 61 – Eligibility Staffing Status

**Rider 61 (S.B. 1, 81<sup>st</sup> Legislature, Regular Session) authorized HHSC to request up to 656 additional staff for FY 2010, and another 166 for FY 2011.**

- The LBB authorized 250 additional staff.

	Authorized FTEs	*Positions Authorized by EC
<b>Strategy A1.2 Authorized</b>	9,039	
<b>Rider 61b Authorized</b>	250	
<b>Total FTEs authorized</b>	<b>9,289</b>	<b>**9,733</b>

- \* To achieve the level of filled staff, the Commission authorized a level of positions to compensate for turnover and vacancies; the 9,733 level provides for a 4.5 percent vacancy rate.
- \*\* Authorized positions include 8,630 eligibility determination positions (field offices and specialized units) and 1,103 regional and eligibility support positions (operations, policy, technical support).

	HHSC Filled Positions	LBB Authorized FTEs	Variance
<b>Filled Eligibility Positions (all Strategy A1.2) as of August 12, 2010</b>	9,319	9,289	<b>30</b>
<b>Average Year to Date Filled Eligibility Positions (all Strategy A1.2)</b>	9,208	9,289	<b>-81</b>

Filled positions include 8,380 eligibility determination positions (field offices and specialized units) and 939 regional and eligibility support positions (operations, policy, technical support).

**Since September 1, HHSC has had a net gain of 864 field eligibility determination staff, for a total of 8,380 statewide as of August 12, 2010.**

Regions	Filled Positions (9/3/09)	Filled Positions (12/3/09)	Filled Positions (3/4/10)	Filled Positions (6/4/10)	Filled Positions (7/1/10)	Filled Positions (8/5/10)	Filled Positions (8/12/10)	Net Change In Filled Positions (9/3/09 through 8/12/10)
1-Lubbock	159	213	218	213	219	220	220	61
2/9- Abilene	212	229	254	253	256	254	255	43
3-Grand Prairie	1,008	1,248	1,305	1,305	1,314	1,323	1,324	316
4-Tyler	254	269	275	281	280	277	282	28
5-Beaumont	228	241	249	250	250	251	251	23
6-Houston	1,193	1,246	1,259	1,300	1,298	1,277	1,278	85
7-Austin	638	644	652	662	666	663	664	26
8-San Antonio	554	643	692	705	701	692	701	147
10-El Paso	447	451	451	449	451	450	455	8
11-Edinburg	968	993	1,003	1,009	1,010	1,008	1,019	51
Asst. Response Team*	584	587	589	282	287	286	288	-296
Customer Care Center	274	335	334	620	619	621	619	345
MEPD	997	1,012	1,020	1,030	1,022	1,021	1,024	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,516</b>	<b>8,111</b>	<b>8,301</b>	<b>8,359</b>	<b>8,373</b>	<b>8,343</b>	<b>8,380</b>	<b>864</b>

\*Assistance Response Team (ART) includes the Centralized Representative Unit that handles Fair Hearings.

# Eligibility Staffing Analysis

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## **H.B. 3859 (81<sup>st</sup> Legislature, Regular Session) directed HHSC to conduct an analysis of staffing needs for the enhanced eligibility system and expansion of TIERS.**

- HHSC's eligibility system is currently in transition, which creates unique challenges in developing a staffing model.
  - Three of the ten health and human services regions (77 of 254 counties) are fully transitioned to TIERS.
    - Remaining counties continue to process cases in both SAVERR and TIERS. This duality is inherently inefficient.
  - HHSC is at various stages of assessing and implementing several improvements to streamline how clients access information about their cases and access services.
    - Not enough information available at this time to determine the impact of these changes within the staffing model.

# Eligibility Staffing Analysis

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- Staffing analysis focused on Texas Works staff who process Medicaid for Women, Children, Youth, and Needy Families; SNAP; and TANF.
- Data analyzed indicated that there is no significant difference in productivity between the legacy system and TIERS.
  - No additional staff are required to accommodate the transition to TIERS.
- Projected caseload increases are the primary driver for increased staffing levels.
  - Additional staff are required to meet increasing caseloads and to reduce overtime to sustainable levels.
  - Current forecasts indicate projected caseload growth of nearly ten percent between 2011 and 2012.

# Eligibility Staffing Analysis

**Following are projections for the Texas Works staffing levels identified for state fiscal years 2011-2013 for eligibility offices and centralized units.**

	Advisor II-III	Advisor IV	Clerks	Supervisors	Total Staff	Change	Estimated Caseload
Current	4,772	613	1,586	447	7,418	-	2,648,000
FY 2011	5,730	1,010	1,790	530	9,060	1,642	2,911,000
FY 2012	5,840	1,030	1,790	540	9,200	140	2,993,000
FY 2013	5,960	1,050	1,790	550	9,350	150	3,054,000

- *Staffing levels shown for fiscal year 2010 represent Texas Works positions filled in May 2010, and are for comparison purposes. This is a subset of all regional staff.*

## **III. SNAP Error Rates**

# Error Rates Sanction

- **On June 24, 2010, Texas received notification of the federal fiscal year 2009 national average error rates.**
- **Texas was out of compliance for the second consecutive year, and a liability amount of \$3.96 million was established for FFY 2009.**
  - The Positive Error Rate reflects benefits that are over- or under-issued compared to the amount a household was entitled to receive.
    - National Average Payment Error Rate was 4.36 percent.
    - Texas' final Payment Error Rate was 6.90 percent.
  - The Negative Error Rate reflects the correctness of an action to deny, suspend, or terminate SNAP benefits and whether or not the state complied with procedural requirements.
    - National Average Negative Error Rate was 9.41 percent.
    - Texas' final Negative Error Rate was 14.82 percent.

# Error Rates Sanction

- **On June 30, 2010, HHSC responded with its intent to appeal the sanction.**
- **Uncontrollable events, including Hurricane Ike and caseload growth impacted error rates in Texas.**
  - Hurricane Ike
    - Errors occurred as the result of actions the agency took to divert staff resources to work disaster applications and maintain client access to benefits.
    - Additionally, errors that occurred in the disaster time period may be attributed to overworked staff often working under less than desirable circumstances (temporary offices).
  - Caseload Growth
    - Texas experienced 20.9 percent growth in the average number of households from the base period of April 2007 – March 2008, to the comparison period of July 2008 – June 2009.
- **HHSC submitted the appeal to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) in late August.**
  - FNS will have 60 days from the date of receipt to respond to the brief.

## SNAP accuracy has significantly improved in fiscal year 2010.

	FFY 2009	FFY 2010			
	Oct-Sep	January	February	March	April**
<b>SNAP Positive Error Rate</b>	6.82%	1.94%	2.16%	1.95%	1.87%
<b>SNAP Negative Error Rate</b>	14.19%	6.80%	6.08%	6.24%	5.63%

\*April is early alert data

## Error Rates of Largest Issuance States

Rank	State	Issuance in Billions*	FFY 2010 (to date)	
			Payment Error Rate (PER)**	Negative Error Rate (NER)**
1	Texas	\$4.40	1.94	6.80
2	California	\$4.38	4.20	10.55
3	New York	\$3.96	4.30	8.76
4	Florida	\$2.97	1.43	5.00
5	Illinois	\$2.32	1.50	9.21
6	Ohio	\$2.17	3.19	6.72
7	Michigan	\$2.11	5.59	10.42
8	Georgia	\$1.94	1.62	12.02
9	Pennsylvania	\$1.90	1.66	7.33
10	North Carolina	\$1.63	2.68	5.17

\* FNS reported 2009 SNAP benefits issuance data as of 6/30/10

\*\* PER and NER based on FNS release of state reported cumulative rates 6/24/10

## **IV. TIERS Rollout Status**

# Michigan Experience: Bridges

**In August 2009, Michigan completed a statewide transition to Bridges, a modern automation system that supports eligibility determinations.**

- Michigan utilized the code from TIERS as the foundation for Bridges

## **During Michigan's rollout to Bridges:**

- **Productivity and timeliness temporarily declined and errors increased as workers adjusted to the new system. Staff returned to prior performance levels within approximately six months.**
  - Michigan's SNAP payment error rate prior to rollouts in federal fiscal year (FFY) 2008 was 5.77 percent. It rose to 6.52 percent in FFY 2009, and has now decreased to 4.41 percent.
    - Comparatively, Texas' SNAP error rates were high last fiscal year and have significantly improved in the current fiscal year. Impact on error rates in the newly converted regions has not yet been assessed (quality control sampling and reviews are completed 3 to 4 months following the benefit month).
  - Michigan's timeliness for SNAP applications averaged 79.9 percent in FFY 2008 and fell to 60 percent two months after conversion was completed. Timeliness is now at 94.3 percent.
    - Timeliness for SNAP applications in Texas has been improving statewide and continues to be in the low- to mid- 90 percent in most regions of the state, including those newly converted to TIERS.
  - Caseloads continued to increase during the Michigan conversion. Texas is experiencing this same trend.

# TIERS Transition Update

**High performance levels have been achieved in the Lubbock and El Paso regions in the month following conversion; based on Michigan's experience, this level of performance may not be achieved by all regions immediately following conversion.**

- **In May 2010, HHSC completed conversion of the Lubbock Region.**
  - Timeliness prior to conversion (May) was 90.1 percent for SNAP applications and 93.2 percent for renewals. In the month following conversion (June), application timeliness was at 90.5 percent and renewals were at 96.2 percent.
- **In July 2010, the El Paso Region was converted to TIERS.**
  - Prior to conversion, timeliness in June was at 91.3 percent for SNAP applications and 92.7 percent for renewals.
  - In July, just prior to conversion, timeliness decreased to 85.1 percent for applications, while renewal timeliness improved to 93.1 percent.
    - As El Paso staff were in TIERS training, their cases were worked by ART staff (experienced TIERS-trained staff). There were fewer bi-lingual ART staff, and due to the high concentration of Spanish speaking clients in El Paso translation services were utilized more frequently, which slowed down processing.
  - Preliminary data for the region since conversion indicates that 93.1 percent of SNAP applications and renewals are being completed timely.

# Top Ten Rollout Lessons Learned

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## **1. Identify Single Point of Ownership**

Identify a clear leader that can coordinate and drive rollout activities across key areas of the agency – e.g., application development, architecture, policy, operations, training and readiness teams.

## **2. Align Funding and Resources with Rollout Timeline**

Coordinate across the agency to define the rollout resource schedule and verify that the appropriate hardware, software, training and support resources are available when you need them.

## **3. Manage Change and Expectations**

Communicate early and communicate often; it is the key to managing expectations. Get staff buy-in early and engage them throughout the process. Define your stakeholders at all levels and communicate regularly with them. Provide feedback mechanisms for staff and stakeholders.

## **4. Incorporate On- Site Visits**

On site visits enable the implementation team to better understand the landscape and operations at a particular region and office. This brings issues to light and facilitates improvements to the rollout plan.

## **5. Report and Monitor Conversion Statistics**

Plan for conversion dry runs within each region. Monitor and report dry run conversion results along with actions that the regions can take to improve the conversion statistics.

## **6. Provide Integrated Training Approach**

Integrate policy, operations and systems training. Create role-based and task-based training with hands on practice. Allow for on-the-job training that provides real-world case experience. Provide classroom support.

## **7. Provide Work Relief Support**

Schedule training so no more than 25% of office staff is in training at one time. Provide back-up staff that can support everyday case activities so staff are not overwhelmed after returning from training and work remains timely.

## **8. Organize Clean-Up Team**

Expect that there will be cases that were converted but had a benefit mismatch between the old and new system. Assign these cases to a dedicated clean-up team so the operational rhythm of staff is not affected.

## **9. Create Command Center**

Establish a central command center to monitor and track issues from newly converted offices, central office, and various technology teams. Provide a management team on-site immediately following the rollout. In addition, establish a direct telephone line to a command center that is staffed to quickly answer questions and route problems to the appropriate resource.

## **10. Provide Effective On Site Support**

Deploy an on site support team to provide coaching and reinforce training for staff. They can help troubleshoot and resolve issues before escalation to a help desk. Lessons learned can be applied to future conversions.

# TIERS Conversion Planning

**Current caseloads and the schedule for the regions planned for conversion are as follows:**

<b>Region</b>	<b>All Programs SAVERR Cases* (excluding MEPD)</b>	<b>SNAP SAVERR Cases</b>	<b>Proposed Rollout Date</b>
<b>Region 1 - Lubbock</b>	<b>70,041</b>	<b>34,157</b>	<b>COMPLETED</b>
<b>Region 10 - El Paso</b>	<b>118,843</b>	<b>63,066</b>	<b>COMPLETED</b>
<b>Region 5 - Beaumont</b>	<b>82,834</b>	<b>45,630</b>	<b>October 2010</b>
<b>Region 4 - Tyler</b>	<b>106,331</b>	<b>55,549</b>	<b>November 2010</b>
<b>Region 2/9 - Abilene</b>	<b>96,732</b>	<b>49,372</b>	<b>January 2011</b>

\*Cases are based on current caseloads, and include SNAP, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), TANF-related Medicaid, and Texas Works Medicaid. Medicaid for the Elderly and People with Disabilities (MEPD) cases are excluded and will not be converted.

- The plan for conversion of the remaining regions – Dallas/Fort Worth, Edinburg, Houston, and San Antonio – is currently being reviewed.
  - The plan will require federal approval.
  - Statewide conversion is targeted for completion by the end of 2011.

# **V. Eligibility Business Process Improvements and Policy Changes**

**Texas will expand online self service options available to clients.**

- **HHSC will implement an expanded Self-Service Portal in early 2011 that will allow data entered online by applicants to be directly imported into TIERS.**
  - The current online application produces an electronic image that must be data entered by eligibility staff.

**In Spring 2010, HHSC developed a Comprehensive Management Improvement Plan (CMIP) to improve the timeliness, accuracy, and efficiency in determining eligibility for the SNAP, Medicaid, and TANF programs.**

- The plan incorporates HHSC initiatives, as well as recommendations from the State Auditor's Office, the statewide single audit, and U.S.D.A. Food and Nutrition Service SNAP Corrective Action Plans.

# Comprehensive Management Improvement Plan

- **CMIP covers approximately 60 recommendations and contains more than 70 related project plans covering the following categories:**
  - Communication with Clients - phone systems, signage, forms, and Internet and web-based communication
  - Clerical Support - improved training and increased focus on customer service
  - Workforce Management - productivity standards, new hire mentoring, and improving training
  - Program Management and Monitoring Improvements - performance indicators and monitoring, system usability and capacity, and employee feedback mechanisms
  - Local Office Business Processes - improved office procedures to more efficiently answer client questions, resolve client issues, and provide services
  - Process and System Integrity - policies and procedures for case record management, case reviews for required documentation, improved automated controls, and other actions to strengthen program integrity and comply with corrective action plans
- **CMIP project progress is monitored regularly and issues are resolved by cross-divisional workgroups that involve executive management.**
- **Many projects are on target to be implemented in 2010.**

**Under a waiver agreement with the Food and Nutrition Service, HHSC and the Texas Food Bank Network are piloting expanded eligibility assistance with local food banks.**

- Waiver allows the food banks' contact with applicants to count as the required SNAP interview, which will help reduce workload for eligibility offices
  - This eliminates a redundant step, which streamlines the application process for clients
  - State staff continue to determine eligibility after reviewing the applications for completeness and follow-up with applicants directly for any other information needed to make the eligibility decision
- Pilot began March 1, 2010, with the food banks in Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio.
  - A total of 61 food bank staff have received HHSC training to conduct interviews.
  - As of August 16, the food bank staff have conducted 8,151 interviews.

	Houston Food Bank	North Texas Food Bank	San Antonio Food Bank	Tarrant Area Food Bank	Cumulative*
<b>Interviews Conducted</b>	4,167	2,563	1,742	604	9,076

\*as of 08/30/10

## Data from a representative sample of interviewed applications submitted to HHSC by the food banks shows the following:

- SNAP applications interviewed by the pilot food banks are being processed timely.

**Expedited Application Timeliness**

Benefit Month	CPI Project	
	Number Disposed	Disposed Timely
March 2010	75	100.0%
April 2010	195	100.0%
May 2010	232	96.5%

**Non-Expedited Application Timeliness**

Benefit Month	CPI Project	
	Number Disposed	Disposed Timely
March 2010	107	98.1%
April 2010	320	96.9%
May 2010	468	96.6%

- 100 percent of the sampled expedited applications received under the pilot were approved.
- An average of 88.4 percent of the sampled non-expedited applications received were approved each month.
- In April 2011, HHSC is scheduled to rollout a TIERS self-service option for CBOs that will allow automated data collection and reporting for the pilot.

**Federal Health Care Reform will require HHSC to change the eligibility criteria and verifications for a large percentage of the current Medicaid caseload, as well as an estimated 1.2 million that will be newly eligible for Medicaid in 2014.**

- HHSC is reviewing existing procedures and policies across programs to determine how to maximize efficiency to ensure that performance does not suffer as a result of continuing caseload growth.
- To this end, HHSC is analyzing options that will maximize the use of technology, improve customer service, and ensure program integrity. For example:
  - Provide an option for clients to receive notifications electronically rather than by mail.
  - Develop a phone or web-based system to automate client interviews.
  - Expand the use of electronic verifications to reduce the need to follow-up with applicants, which can delay receipt of benefits.
  - Align the various programs' policies where possible to aid eligibility workers in completing eligibility determinations.

**APPENDIX:**  
**Managerial and System Efficiency Solutions for Improving SNAP Timeliness**  
**Status of Recommendations to Help Improve Timeliness**

POLICY CHANGES	Considerations	Status
<p><b>1. One-Time Change in Certification Periods for SNAP Households with No Earned Income Unlikely to Have a Change in Status</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For cases with no earned income but who have income from other sources (SSI, child support) that have a certification expiring December 2009 – May 2010, the certification period will be extended an additional 6 months.</li> <li>• Eligible households with no earned income are unlikely to experience changes in their eligibility status.</li> <li>• Clients are required to report all changes that affect benefits during this time period.</li> <li>• Will remove an estimated 20,000 recertifications from the appointment schedule statewide each month.</li> <li>• While this change reduces workload, it may negatively impact the error rate if a client fails to report a change.</li> </ul>	<p>Reduced workload and improved timeliness.</p>	<p><b>Implementation began December 2009 and completed March 2010:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A total of 246,665 cases with last benefit month of December 2009 and January - May 2010 were extended by six months.</li> <li>• Very few payment errors have been identified in relation to the extensions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Pilot Utilizing TWC Quarterly Wage Data/Records as Verification of Wages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently approximately 60% of all SNAP applications/recertifications with earned income are pended because applicants fail to provide documentation of income, creating additional workload. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A notice is issued to the client that the documentation is missing.</li> <li>– If the documentation is later provided, the eligibility worker must revisit the case.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• TWC’s wage data is available to HHSC staff through computer inquiry and could be used to determine eligibility in the absence of other wage documentation from the client. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Research estimates TWC data could be used to verify wages on about 30% of applications/recertifications with earnings.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Pilot was conducted in November 2009 at local offices in Amarillo, San Antonio, and the Customer Care Center in Athens and demonstrated that approximately 50% fewer cases were pended for verification of wages.</li> </ul>	<p>Reduces workload, improves client services, may impact QC.</p>	<p><b>Implemented Statewide in February 2010</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legacy automation system modifications were implemented in February 2010.</li> <li>• TIERS modifications were implemented in April 2010.</li> <li>• To date, there have been no errors attributed to this policy change. Impact to the error rate will continue to be assessed.</li> </ul>

POLICY CHANGES	Considerations	Status
<p><b>3. Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) for SNAP Households</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require the same standard utility allowance for all households that incur a heating or cooling cost or who receive a Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program benefit.</li> <li>• Instead of computing a separate utility allowance for each applicant, this change applies a standard deduction which simplifies policy and reduces workload for staff.</li> </ul>	<p>Reduces workload and reducing risk of QC errors.</p>	<p><b>Implemented March 2010</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System change implemented in February 2010 and TAC rule became effective March 1, 2010.</li> <li>• No errors related to the SUA have been identified since implementation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Modify SNAP Policy to Implement Interim Change Reporting at Six Months</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With this change, households must complete and return income and asset information at six months for a twelve month certification period. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Eliminates the need for an interview at six months.</li> <li>– Income and asset information is verified at the sixth month and an eligibility determination is made.</li> <li>– If a household does not return the information in the sixth month, or is now ineligible, they are disenrolled.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• This would impact 738,673 cases in the current caseload and would reduce workload.</li> <li>• Apply risk-based criteria to identify cases unlikely to experience changes in eligibility status during the certification period. These cases could be exempted from the interim reporting requirement further reducing workload.</li> </ul>	<p>More flexibility in workload planning with fewer interviews required.</p>	<p><b>Initiative Postponed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on a review of the agency’s priorities and the requirements and work effort associated with this change (systems changes, implementing a new business process, and staff training), it was determined that resources (staff and funding) should be focused on other initiatives at this time</li> <li>• HHSC may reconsider this option in the future</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Allow Community Based Organizations’ (CBO) Assistance to Client to Meet the Interview Requirement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal regulations require that state staff interview SNAP applicants.</li> <li>• A Federal waiver was approved to allow CBO application assistance efforts to meet the interview requirement for those clients.</li> <li>• State employees continue to verify information and determine eligibility. Third party information obtained through data broker will continue to be utilized to verify information submitted on the application.</li> </ul>	<p>Reduces workload and increases client access.</p>	<p><b>Received federal approval in February and pilot began on March 1, 2010</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A total of 8,418 interviews have been conducted by the four Food Banks through August 19, 2010.</li> </ul>

<b>POLICY CHANGES</b>	<b>Considerations</b>	<b>Status</b>
<p><b>5. Allow CBO Assistance to Meet the Interview Requirement (cont.)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participating Food Banks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Houston Food Bank</li> <li>- North Texas Food Bank</li> <li>- San Antonio Food Bank</li> <li>- Tarrant Area Food Bank</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 62 food bank interviewers have been trained.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancements to the online self-service portal for CBOs are planned for 2011 that will facilitate the submission of pilot applications and pilot reporting and tracking.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Eliminate Interview Requirement at Recertification for SSI Recipient SNAP Cases</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modify interview requirements for SSI or other cases the agency deems stable through a risk-based assessment.</li> <li>• Continue current policy to verify income and assets.</li> </ul>	<p>Reduces workload and improves client access.</p>	<p><b>Implemented in May 2010</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FNS Waiver approval was received March 30, 2010.</li> <li>• HHSC implemented the new policy effective May 2010.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Telephone Interviews for Initial Applicants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilizing telephone interviews to the maximum extent possible for initial applicants instead of face to face appointments.</li> <li>• Allowing telephone interviews is more convenient to the applicant and provides additional scheduling flexibility.</li> </ul>	<p>Improves client services, scheduling flexibility</p>	<p><b>Implemented April 2009</b></p>

## Actions Implemented or in Process of Implementation

POLICY CHANGES	Considerations	Status
<p><b>1. Flexibility on SNAP Verification</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Verify income and identification on backlogged applications. Apply risk-based criteria to reduce other verifications.</li> </ul>	Allows faster processing of cases in backlog status	<p><b>Implemented December 2009 – May 2010 only</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy was limited to overdue cases only and the regular policy applied to all other cases.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Streamlining for SSI SNAP Recipients</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transferred approximately 20,000 elderly SSI recipients from the regular SNAP caseload to the more streamlined SNAP Combined Application Project (CAP) caseload.</li> <li>Eliminated the need for interviews for 20,000 recipients and made more appointment slots available to the office for regular SNAP recipients.</li> <li>Federal approval from the Food and Nutrition Service was required to make this change.</li> </ul>	Workload relief, improves client services, error reduction	<p><b>Implemented April 2009</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To date in federal FY 2010 (October 2009-April 2010), no errors have been attributed to the extension of SNAP-CAP benefits.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Processing Dual Certifications for Delinquent Cases</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For untimely SNAP and Children's Medicaid cases that are processed more than sixty days after the application is received, two certification periods are granted for eligible households using one application and a single interview.</li> <li>One case is certified for the period from the application date to the date it is disposed. Another case is certified for the full eligibility period.</li> <li>Eligibility for SNAP is retroactive to the date of application - without this change, for cases that are delinquent in processing; the renewal process would begin shortly after the case is disposed.</li> </ul>	Improves timeliness and client services	<p><b>Implemented August 2009 – May 2010 only.</b></p>
<p><b>4. Using Social Security Administration (SSA) Data for Citizenship Verification</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal law allows an electronic data match with SSA's system to satisfy citizenship and nationalization verification requirements.</li> <li>Approval is required from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for federal funding for implementation.</li> </ul>	Reduces pending time	<p><b>Targeted for implementation in November 2010.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System changes will be scheduled following federal approval.</li> </ul>

POLICY CHANGES	Considerations	Status
<p><b>5. Access to OAG Data for SNAP Related Child Support Information Via Data Broker</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligibility staff currently research child support income or payments by performing a separate inquiry into the OAG’s child support payment database when the applicant self-reports that they receive or make child support payments.</li> <li>• HHSC is developing a direct interface with the child support payment database which would allow workers to obtain child support information in the same inquiry they receive other data.</li> <li>• Errors related to child support income or payments represent the second most commonly occurring errors in the SNAP program. This change will reduce the likelihood of an error.</li> <li>• A direct interface reduces staff workload.</li> </ul>	<p>Reduces workload and QC liability</p>	<p><b>Targeted for implementation in January 2011.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HHSC continues to work with OAG to develop the interface.</li> </ul>

PROCESS CHANGES	Outcome	Status
<p><b>6. Scheduling Appointments for Recertification Forms Upon Receipt</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointments for recertification interviews are scheduled when the renewal application is received.</li> <li>• SNAP reapplication rate is 70% and appointments are not scheduled for households that do not reapply.</li> </ul>	<p>Reduces no-show rate so appointment slots are used efficiently</p>	<p><b>Implemented September 2008</b></p>
<p><b>7. Streamlined Interview for Applications - Same Day Next Day Service</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In areas facing the highest caseload volumes, cases are being grouped and worked by teams of experienced and less experienced staff, allowing more cases to be processed with the same amount of resources and provide services the same day or following day.</li> </ul>	<p>Improves timeliness and client services</p>	<p><b>Implemented September 2009</b> A total of 207 offices out of 315 have implemented this process.</p>
<p><b>8. Schedule “Blitz” Interviewing for SNAP Recertifications for Experienced Staff</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On a limited number of days per month eligibility workers with 12 months experience or more are scheduled additional interview appointments.</li> </ul>	<p>Improves timeliness and client services</p>	<p><b>Implemented August 2009 and ongoing as needed.</b></p>

PROCESS CHANGES	Outcome	Status
<p><b>9. Maximize Eligibility Staff Processing Cases</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advisor IVs who typically assist with supervisory activities are reassigned to assist with SNAP expedited applications.</li> </ul>	Improves timeliness and client services	<p><b>Implemented August 2009 and ongoing.</b></p> <p>Advisors IVs have resumed their normal responsibilities, but are still used in this capacity on an as-needed basis.</p>
<p><b>10. Assignment of Additional Workload to All Eligibility Staff</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional work will be assigned to all staff members and each employee will be allowed to decide when they will complete these assignments during the business week or on Saturdays. Workers may request additional overtime to process more work assignments.</li> </ul>	Improves timeliness and client services	<p><b>Implemented August 2009 and ongoing.</b></p> <p>Staff may volunteer for overtime as needed, but there is no requirement for mandatory overtime.</p>
<p><b>11. Assignment of State Office Support Staff to Work in Local Offices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State office program specialists and quality assurance specialists located in the regions are assigned to local offices to assist with case readings, office processes, interviewing, and other support activities.</li> </ul>	Improves timeliness and client services	<p><b>Implemented October 2009 through May 2015.</b></p> <p>October through May 15, specialists assisted local offices by processing more than 105,000 cases.</p>
<p><b>12. State Office Staff Working in Local Offices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State office or regional staff who support eligibility determination workers work one day per month in a local office as front desk support, filing, interpreting, or other support activity. This provides workload relief and allows for the identification of best practices.</li> </ul>	Provides support to local office	<p><b>Implemented October 1, 2009 and ongoing through December 31, 2010.</b></p> <p>This initiative was extended due to the ongoing need for support in local eligibility offices.</p>
<p><b>13. Expansion of Community Based Organization Application Assistance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional \$2 million in general revenue funds for 2010 is being allocated to expand application assistance to food banks across the state.</li> <li>• Model allows authorized food banks' trained outreach workers to assist applicants with completing the application, screening the application for completeness including verifications and signatures, and answering client questions.</li> <li>• Applications that are received through this process are complete and require less state staff time for processing.</li> </ul>	Reduces workload, improves client access	<p><b>Implemented March 2010</b></p> <p>Funding provided in FY 2010 to the Texas Food Bank Network for activities to support pilots, including expanded application assistance and interviewing SNAP applicants (see Attachment A. 5.)</p>

PROCESS CHANGES	Outcome	Status
<p><b>14. Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial training streamlined to deploy new staff in offices as quickly as possible, with focus on SNAP cases.</li> <li>• Accelerate SNAP training for newly hired eligibility staff – reduce 40 day training to 10 days (7 days of policy and 3 days of system training) for SAVERR users.</li> <li>• Accelerate SNAP training for newly hired eligibility staff – reduce 40 day training to 10 days of policy and 10 days of TIERS functionality.</li> <li>• Combine SNAP and Children’s Medicaid training – reduce 40 day training to 20 days.</li> <li>• On the job “Cluster” training environments, assigning peers and mentors to new staff to provide support and help them learn job functions.</li> </ul>	<p>Newly hired staff will be productive sooner, increases staff retention</p>	<p><b>Implemented November 2009</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New SAVERR staff are now receiving 20 day training for combined SNAP and Children’s Medicaid.</li> <li>• New TIERS staff receive 20 days of training for SNAP and Medicaid and 10 days of TIERS functionality training. Beginning in June, a 4-week break occurs between SNAP and Medicaid training to allow for on-the-job training.</li> <li>• TIERS functionality training for SAVERR staff began February 2010.</li> <li>• Implementation scheduled for November 2010 for Policy and System Functionality in TIERS for new hires, following completion of on-the-job training for trainer staff.</li> </ul>
<p><b>15. Phone System Upgrades</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgraded office phone systems to improve ability to conduct phone interviews.</li> <li>• HHS secured funding and capital budget authority during the 2008-09 biennium to install new phone systems at 152 sites throughout the state from 12/2008 ending 8/2009.</li> <li>• The LBB and Governor approved additional 2009 capital authority, which will also address needed telephone improvements.</li> </ul>	<p>Improves client services, reduce wait time for an open phone line, complete interviews faster</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phone system upgrades to provide sufficient capacity are planned for eligibility offices across the state.</li> <li>• Since April 2010, a total of 30 out of 220 sites have received upgraded capacity and/or have been refreshed.</li> <li>• Statewide implementation for remaining phones is targeted for April 2012.</li> </ul>

EMPLOYEE MORALE & RETENTION INITIATIVES	Outcome	Status
<p><b>16. Eligibility Regional Staff Meetings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive staff meeting with all regional staff to discuss performance issues, share information and get input on resolution strategies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Region 4 – September 8, 2009 Tyler</li> <li>- Region 3 – September 9-10 Grand Prairie, 4 sessions</li> <li>- Region 1 – October 15 Lubbock</li> <li>- Region 10 – October 16 El Paso, 2 sessions</li> <li>- Region 5 – October 27 Beaumont</li> <li>- Region 6 – October 28-29 Houston, 4 sessions</li> <li>- Region 8 – November 4-5 San Antonio, 3 sessions</li> <li>- Region 2/9 – November 18 Abilene</li> <li>- Region 2/9 – December 2 Midland</li> <li>- Region 11 – December 3-4 Edinburg, 3 sessions</li> <li>- Region 11 – January 4, 2010 Corpus Christi</li> <li>- Region 7 – January 6 Bryan</li> <li>- Region 7 – January 7 Waco</li> <li>- Region 7 – January 26 Austin, 2 sessions</li> </ul> </li>   <li>• Medicaid for the Elderly and People with Disabilities (MEPD) regional staff began in March 2010: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Region 10 – March 9 El Paso</li> <li>- Region 1 – March 29 Lubbock</li> <li>- Region 2/9 – March 30 Midland</li> <li>- Regions 5 and 6 – April 5 Houston</li> <li>- Regions 7 and 8 – April 12 San Marcos</li> <li>- Regions 3 and 4 – April 22 Duncanville</li> <li>- Region 11 – April 29 Harlingen</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Improves morale and communication</p>	<p><b>Implemented September 2009 – April 2010.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial sessions were completed January 26, 2010.</li> <li>• Meetings with Medicaid for the Elderly and People with Disabilities (MEPD) regional staff were completed in April 2010.</li> </ul>
<p><b>17. Increased Staff Recognition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certificates for error-free QC cases</li> <li>• Reserved parking spots</li> <li>• Administrative Leave awards</li> <li>• Worker Appreciation Day</li> </ul>	<p>Improves morale and staff retention.</p>	<p><b>Implemented October 2009 and ongoing</b>  Commissioner’s Challenge:  For October 2009 – April 2010, Commissioner Suehs</p>

EMPLOYEE MORALE & RETENTION INITIATIVES	Outcome	Status
<p><b>17. Increased Staff Recognition (continued)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervisor Staff Development</li> <li>• Employee of the Quarter</li> <li>• Texas Timeliness Trophy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– First Quarter Timeliness Trophy presented in January 2010 to Region 4 – Tyler area for the best overall timeliness.</li> <li>– Second Quarter Timeliness Trophies presented in March to Region 7 – Austin area for Texas Works and Region 6 – Unit 15 for MEPD.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Improves morale and staff retention.</p>	<p>committed to prepare lunch for the top 5 offices that demonstrated continued improvement on timeliness and provided excellent customer services. Lunches were awarded and occurred in July and August.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional supervisor staff development is scheduled for September 2010.</li> <li>• Other recognition activities are in development.</li> </ul>
<p><b>18. Performance-based Pay Incentive</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measure performance quarterly at the regional level.</li> <li>• Focus on timeliness and quality meeting or exceeding program standards.</li> <li>• Provide financial incentive for consistent performance or significant improvement.</li> </ul>	<p>Promotes and rewards team-work to improve performance.</p>	<p><b>Targeted for implementation in September 2010</b>  Various methods for administering performance-based pay are currently under consideration.</p>
<p><b>19. Supervisor Upgrade</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current supervisor classification was not competitive for the level of responsibility, knowledge and skill required.</li> <li>• Supervisors are exempt from overtime pay, and due to the large amount of overtime currently necessary to meet workload demands, many eligibility workers were paid more than supervisors.</li> <li>• Two classification levels were approved – upgrading entry level from B17 to B19, then automatic upgrade to B21 after two years of satisfactory performance.</li> </ul>	<p>Improves staff retention and ability to attract qualified management staff.</p>	<p><b>Implemented October 2009</b></p>
<p><b>20. One-time Merit Pay Increase</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide financial recognition for direct delivery staff.</li> </ul>	<p>Improves morale and staff retention.</p>	<p><b>Implemented December 2009</b></p>