Task Force on Streamlining County Level Information Access

Final Report

March 10, 2023

To: Members of the General Assembly

From: State Representative Jim Hoops, Chairman

Date: March 10**,** 2023

RE: Final Report – Task Force on Streamlining County Level Information Access

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The Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-2023 biennial budget (HB 110), under section 751.10, created the Task Force on Streamlining County Level Information Access. [1] According to the provision, the task force was charged to make recommendations on how county departments of job and family services, child support enforcement agencies, public children services agencies, and county OhioMeansJobs (OMJ) centers can streamline access to information across IT systems.[2] Specifically, the task force was guided by the following:

(1) Identifying barriers to efficient operations between information technology systems that affect both department and agency operations and services to clients;

(2) For each identified barrier, exploring the feasibility of allowing county employees access to more than one information technology system to provide better service to clients, including by analyzing the flexibility provided and prohibitions under federal law, regulation, guidance, and waivers; and

(3) Prioritizing which barriers should be addressed first based on the outcomes and efficiencies to be gained by improved streamlining processes and information sharing.

The task force identified, evaluated, and compiled meaningful insights, and recommendations for improving county access to information. The task force discussed ways to reduce redundancy and approaches to vastly improving our ability to better serve Ohioans, by assisting them with receiving the necessary resources, while ensuring program integrity.

The task force consisted of 21 members, including two members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and two members appointed by the President of the Senate.

In addition, the task force had representatives from the Department of Job and Family Services, the Department of Medicaid, and the Department of Administrative Services, as well as appointments from the Ohio Job and Family Servicers Directors' Association (OJFSDA), the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO), the Ohio Child Support Enforcement Agency Director's Association (OCDA), the County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO), and the Ohio Workforce Association (OWA).

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[1] FY 2022-FY 2023 biennial budget provision (section 751.10), see page 2411, HB 110 text, as enrolled, https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-documents?id=GA134-HB-110
[2] Ibid.

The task force was chaired by State Representative Jim Hoops. The task force consisted of the following members:

House Appointments	Senate Appointments
Representative Jim Hoops (R), Chairman	Senator Theresa Gavarone (R)
Representative Daniel Troy (D)	Senator Tina Maharath (D)

ODJFSA
Stephanie Kowal, Ottawa County JFS Director
Laura Repasky, Franklin County JFS Chief Operating Officer
Corey Clark, Fairfield County JFS Director
PCSAO
Otis Crockron, Athens County CSB Executive Director
Stacy Cox, Champaign County JFS Director
Dave Wigent, Wood County JFS Director
OCDA
Shayne Oehlhof, Esq., Wayne County CSEA Director
Ginny Martycz, Ph.D, Clark County JFS Director
Narka Gray, Butler County CSEA Assistant Director
CCAO
Shannon Miller, Meigs County Commissioner
Claire Corcoran, Clermont County Commissioner
Matt Carroll, Chief Economic Growth and Opportunity Officer, Office of Cuyahoga County Executive
OWA
Jason Ashbrook, Director, SWORWIB, Hamilton County
Carolyn Fyffe, Program Manager, OhioMeansJobs Pike County

Administration
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Ohio Department of Medicaid
Ohio Department of Administrative Services

The task held its initial meeting on December 7, 2021. Subsequent meetings were held on January 11, 2022, January 25, 2022, and March 8, 2022. In addition, system-based subgroups were created, as part of the Task Force to examine issues more closely, in the following areas: Workforce Development; Child Support; Child Welfare; Public Assistance; and the Enterprise Document Management System (EDMS). There was also a presentation from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Office of Information Services (OIS), providing insights into the digital 7078 process.

Introduction

Counties utilize a variety of information technology (IT) systems in the course of their program obligations, which include the following: (1) determining eligibility for state and federal programs; (2) enforcing, collecting, and distributing child support; (3) investigating, protecting, and

supporting vulnerable children and seniors; and (4) providing workforce services. Furthermore, there is a vast amount of information that is entered into county systems on a daily basis.

In recent years, the state of Ohio has invested in new IT systems. The State has taken steps to update existing systems, identify and remove unintended barriers, as well as modernize operations. As a result, the State's systems currently allow for greater flexibility to support policy decisions, and are more cost effective to implement. These investments, in many instances, may make access to system upgrades easier to prioritize with lower costs and better manageability.

At the same time, there are still opportunities to improve existing systems and operations, strengthen cross-county and cross-agency collaboration, with the goal of improving service for Ohio's residents.

<u>Key Takeaways</u>

The State and counties collectively need to be cognizant of potential bad actors using access to data for personal use, limiting access for non-program purposes, and the need for auditing capabilities across systems. There was consensus from the Task Force and the counties to maintain responsibility and security over data. Additional Task Force takeaways include:

- Enhanced access to information across offices will allow counties to provide improved services to clients.

- Clients assume caseworkers already have their information across county agencies. Potential solutions center on the following strategies: (1) breaking down barriers; (2) accessing information more quickly; (3) reducing the number of touches needed per case, which leads to enhanced client service; (4) faster eligibility determination, while reducing the potential for errors; and (5) limiting the need for customers to make additional trips or calls to their county agency.

- Ensure compliance with state and federal regulations. State regulations will need to be reviewed for potential flexibility. The Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) and ODJFS are committed partners in this effort, which includes supporting the counties in improving the client experience, as well as administrative efficiency.

- The Task Force has identified the need for greater cross-office, cross-agency collaborative training, as some existing methods of accessing client information across systems, or processes for obtaining access, are not widely known or utilized.

- Of the multitude of systems maintained by the state of Ohio, expanding access to information in Ohio Benefits (OB) would be the highest priority for county staff. Also, counties are seeking live, read-only access to basic information, and are not requesting the ability to change or update records.

Identified Gaps and County Level Concerns

Preventing recipient fraud is a recognized priority. If information silos were broken down, it would be easier for fraud workers to complete investigations across different systems and program areas, enhancing program integrity. At the same time, the Task Force recognizes the need to remain vigilant in protecting access to recipient personal information and to combat misuse of that data. Additional Task Force takeaways include:

- State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) data is only available after the county has custody of a child, but not when a caseworker is conducting investigations or dealing with kinship. Additionally, the system features of SACWIS and the Child Support Enforcement Tracking System (SETS) interfaces are designed around eligibility determination, not investigation.

- Counties initially expressed concern with the challenge of front desk workers taking information across all programs. For example, accessing OB information and processing a child support payment in the same customer interaction.

- ODJFS' Office of Child Support (OCS) clarified recently-updated user guides around a federally-approved process to address some of these concerns.

- Cross-system access challenges are exacerbated when counties are not combined agencies or are split across multiple buildings.

- Clients may submit documents to a caseworker for one program, and expect them to be available across agencies, but the provided verification may be inaccessible to other workers within EDMS.

Subgroup Discussion Key Points

As noted above, system-based subgroups were created to discuss county-level suggestions for potential legislative, system, or training solutions. The subgroups focused on the following areas: (1) Workforce Development - the Ohio Workforce Case Management System (OWCMS) and the Advancement through Resources, Information & Employment Services (ARIES) system; (2) Child Support (SETS); (3) Child Welfare (SACWIS); (4) Public Assistance (OB); and (5) EDMS.

Workforce Development – Ohio Workforce Case Management System/Advancement through Resources, Information & Employment Services system

- Discussion primarily focused on information sharing with the Office of Unemployment Insurance Operations, and the identification of previously under-utilized training and support resources that can be made available to county staff. The discussion points included updating guidance memos, how-to videos, live chat support features on the website, a step-

by-step Ohio Identification (OHID) guide, a monthly update call with County Works Incentive Program (WIP) directors and partners, and a hotline phone number specifically for county use in urgent need.

- The OWCMS team is currently compiling these resources in a single location to make them more accessible for county staff.

- Areas of concern with OWCMS information-sharing were noted as something that can potentially be resolved, as the department continues to implement the new ARIES system, which will replace OWCMS.

Child Support – Support Enforcement Tracking System

- A main point of discussion pertained to the General Data Screens. The data screens are a tool that provides basic demographic information, a paternity establishment indicator, medical information, including whether a court order is established, financial information, payment history, known employment, and the assigned caseworker.

- As of February 2022, 31 counties did not have any staff using the application. Counties that are not currently using General Data Screens are as follows: Adams, Allen, Auglaize, Carroll, Coshocton, Crawford, Defiance, Gallia, Hamilton, Hancock, Hardin, Harrison, Henry, Lawrence, Logan, Lorain, Madison, Marion, Monroe, Morgan, Morrow, Paulding, Perry, Pike, Portage, Preble, Richland, Sandusky, Scioto, Van Wert, and Vinton.

- ODJFS' OCS is currently engaged in improving awareness around this tool to provide more consistent training across offices, which includes scheduled trainings and an on-demand recording of the live training that will be available online.

- For scenarios where the information available in General Data Screens is insufficient (ex. front desk staff needing to post payments) and that require full system access, there is a separate, more intensive process for gaining that access and satisfying the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requirements. ODJFS' OCS has updated online guides on this process, and will add training to the standard quarterly calendar. ODJFS is available to work with counties about the process.

- Establishing paternity information was identified as being important. While this is provided through the General Data Screens, it is limited for some uses in the child welfare program and not available overnight. ODJFS' OCS has recently received clearance to share access to the Central Paternity Registry, which is a 24/7 resource covering all children born out of wedlock in the State of Ohio, and is developing a training to go along with it.

Child Welfare - State Automated Child Welfare Information System

- The subgroup held discussions on the current state of how information flows to and from SACWIS, and where additional information access is needed, as well as where there may be a need for additional training. One topic that is a recurring point of confusion is how

common points of information, such as addresses, are or are not updated across systems. The ODJFS Office of Families and Children (OFC) are currently planning a comprehensive interface training to address this need.

Public Assistance - Ohio Benefits

- ODM has identified several areas where increased access is possible, including sharing Medicaid data with OCS. For ODM, three types of information can be shared without explicit permission: (1) verifying income; (2) eligibility; and (3) amount of medical assistance provided, when this information is necessary to verify eligibility for another program. Detailed information can be shared with children services personnel once a county agency has custody of a child. However, the same information may not be available to child protective services workers, prior to the county agency obtaining custody.

- ODM is currently examining the possibility of increasing access through role-based security that can be provided in the Self-Service Reporting tool or directly to specific parts of OB. Also, ODM is reviewing current rules and regulations to identify other potential areas of flexibility.

- Both ODJFS and ODM will be working together to discuss what each program will allow and identify a joint set of recommendations where alignment can occur.

Enterprise Document Management System/Northwoods

The subgroup discussed the process for making documents available across programs and reviewed guidelines around security roles. Additional points include the following:

- There are currently three systems used for document management and workflow – Compass Pilot, OnBase Unity, and Traverse. These systems have slightly differing purposes and features and have been contracted for different programs.

- Northwoods provided an in-depth review of the features, terminology, and access-provisioning process for EDMS.

- Documents scanned in are currently tagged to specific programs, and therefore not necessarily visible across programs, unless users have access across programs per their security role(s).

- Read-only roles are not currently a feature of EDMS, but can be explored as a potential enhancement.

- The program offices support finding ways to make common documents available across programs; the EDMS team can explore potential solutions.

- Counties were asked to share specific scenarios of access or log-in issues with the ODJFS team.

Office of Information Services

As noted above, ODJFS' OIS discussed and provided insights into access provisioning and the digital 7078 process. Additional points made during the presentation include the following:

- ODJFS' OIS team walked through the "Manage EW" portlet to create county users with different roles and agency designations.

- Digital 7078 shows the existing roles, and can be used based on individual user role and county needs.

- ODJFS' OIS team confirmed that "containers" are not an existing constraint with this Role-based access control (RBAC) model.

- After requests are submitted, they are routed to program office administrators for approval; based on each office's policies, they can then approve or deny access requests.

- Potential topic for further exploration/updates is how "containers" play a role in the process of access provisioning; goal would be to ensure they are not a pre-requisite for granting approval.

- Important to note that not all system access requests go through this process. For example, EDMS requests continue to follow the Identity Management System request process.

- Discussion was held on county transfers and retention policies regarding data and email content. ODJFS' OIS team will continue to look into this.

- Program offices will meet internally, to find ways to streamline the access-request-approval process and clarify the process for counties.

Subgroup Action Items/Next Steps

- ODJFS – OIS presented at a meeting to talk through the digital 7078 process and answer questions around system access and approval on 4/12/22.

- ODJFS had a representative from the EDMS team present at a meeting to discuss if or how documents could be made available across programs on 4/21/22.

- ODJFS' Office of Workforce Development is preparing a central resource to compile new and existing training and support measures for counties seeking assistance with unemployment-related inquiries.

- ODJFS' OCS is developing training for Children Services staff on how to navigate and utilize the Central Paternity Registry, which will be made available in the next 1-2 months.

- ODJFS is developing a cross-system interface training to share newly-developed or updated resource and training materials across offices. This effort will include resources from ODM and the ODJFS offices of Families and Children (OFC), Family Assistance (OFA), Child Support (OCS), and Workforce Development (OWD).

- ODM and ODJFS' Office of Family Assistance (OFA) will discuss potential for granting additional access to OB data through role-based security.

ODJFS and ODM - Updates and Actions Taken to Date

- ODJFS' OFA has met with federal partners to discuss opportunities for flexibility and potential changes. Discussions are ongoing and final proposals will be shared at a future date.

- ODJFS' OFC is continuing to work through federal requirements to identify opportunities to reduce barriers to information-sharing. This effort will complement a Children Services Transformation recommendation to address system barriers and constraints.

- ODJFS' OCS is reviewing county-identified data gaps. ODJFS emphasized availability of General Data Screens and a newly-revamped User Guide. In addition to the General Data Screens, the department has provided direction on how to request enhanced levels of access.

- ODJFS is planning to provide guidance on requesting access. This will be scheduled on the OFA videoconference, which will provide guidance to the counties. Additionally, the department will be working with other offices on availability to address county access concerns, as well as planning quarterly trainings for program partners.

- ODJFS is currently in the process of transitioning from OWCMS to a new system, referred to as ARIES and is working to maintain current data-sharing capabilities post-transition. As the new system is built, the department will work with developers to ensure that information will be available for other programs and county operations.

- ODM has been reviewing federal authority, primarily from the Social Security Act, to identify potential solutions within federal privacy guidelines.

Identified Training Considerations

- How to use ODJFS' OCS "General Data Screens," utilizing the revamped User Guide and publicizing the planned quarterly trainings for program partners.

- Per ODJFS' OCS, there is currently a process for requesting access to related information, in addition to the information that is available in the General Data Screens. The process requires a Memorandum of Understanding and an additional contract with the state, but that has satisfied IRS requirements.

- How to use the window that pops up when there is an address mismatch between OB and SACWIS or SETS, to ensure that the most-current address is being used, rather than overwritten. Also, information on these interfaces, the data they include, and their triggers/cadence.

Next Steps and Future Goals

In addition to workers being able to access multiple systems, the Task Force discovered that it would be beneficial to identify a system-based way of helping clients only needing to report information once, and for it to then be shared across systems/offices. At the same time, having EDMS access and file-sharing across offices through the assignment of multiple user roles would be of added value. The Task force also noted the following items:

- ODJFS is also looking into the use of Ad Hoc Reports as a potential support for accessing information, to be used by Adult Protective Services (APS) and other non-JFS county agencies. ODJFS will continue to include this option as an accessible resource.

- ODJFS' legal department will review the limitations of current state statutes and regulations.

- Research the potential to make SACWIS data available for investigators' pre-county custody.

- Examine the requirements for a universal-program front desk worker role, with view-only access and the ability to take verification across all systems, to provide a one-stop-shop experience for clients.

- Verify audit capabilities for all discussed systems, specifically whether viewing and editing data are both collected for all users. Currently, OB has the capability to track both view-only and all updates, but this may be verified for other systems.

- Evaluate potential for building in-program view-only access with specific groups and roles across systems. For example, SACWIS or SETS having a specific group that has capabilities to view certain tabs within OB.

- Review how some partner agencies and entities have acquired access to MITS (Medicaid Information Technology System), or successor system, and OB for Medicaid programs, to understand how that access is being utilized and provide the same access to county workers.

- ODM to confirm if their federal regulations allow for flexibility around access to OB. Also, the ODM legal department will review state statutes and regulations to determine if they need to be amended or eliminated altogether in order to streamline county-level information access.

- Collect and disseminate county best practices with regard to cross-agency communication and information-sharing.

- Continue close collaboration and joint contributions from ODJFS, ODM, and the Department of Administrative Services (DAS)

- ODJFS to continue development of a cross-system interface training to share newly-developed, or updated resource and training materials across offices.

Task Force Recommendations

The Task Force on Streamlining County Level Information Access has provided a useful forum for state, county, and legislative leaders to work collaboratively to address access to information challenges experienced by county human service and workforce agencies.
Improved access to known information in the multiple ODJFS computer systems will improve services to Ohio residents, as well as improve efficiencies and assist caseworkers in the performance of their duties.

Several of the recommendations may have already been addressed by the state of Ohio or are on the list of items already underway, based on the subgroup discussions described in the above sections.

1. Enhanced training to identify existing processes and operations to better access information between systems.

2. Establishment of streamlined processes for a county worker to have access to more than one information system when the system data is relevant to the worker's job.

3. Allow maximum flexibility to access information unless specifically restricted by federal or state law.

4. Recommend the state teams continue to review underlying policy to determine where expanded access to information is possible and make appropriate system changes. (Through the subgroup process, state team members confirmed that worker access to all systems is possible from a technological perspective).

5. Ensure the state innerweb pages for county workers include information and instructions necessary to improve access to information. ODJFS offices are currently drafting new and updating existing access guidelines for their respective systems, and will be cross-posting them on each office's respective innerweb page(s).

6. Create procedures to ensure proper use of data to safeguard program and system integrity.

7. Prioritize Task Force recommendations that resolve information sharing among the ODJFS program areas before any attempts to broaden such efforts to non-county entities. (There are other non-county entities which also seek to have access to system information. Since this information is vital to the core work of the county agencies, it is recommended that county functionality issues be addressed prior to work in other systems).

8. Develop state/county ongoing workgroups to identify ways to improve information sharing, duplication of entry and burdensome functionality.

9. Identify a mechanism or interface to allow Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) staff to have access to EDMS and to pull those documents into the new workforce ARIES system.

10. Discuss the most effective way to provide EDMS service and access for the state workforce system. Currently, the workforce system does not have a Northwoods, or other, document imaging system, and the new ARIES system does not interface with EDMS. This will include conversation on the feasibility and efficacy of either leveraging the existing system or implementing a new system.

11. Permit county OMJ workers to access (when appropriate) the state unemployment system to help answer customer questions regarding unemployment. (County agencies were overwhelmed with unemployed Ohioans seeking unemployment assistance throughout the pandemic. Access to the system could have been extremely beneficial helping Ohioans get through the process quicker and more efficiently, including helping to reset passwords and report status of applications.)

12. Provide additional support to the counties to assist in answering consumer inquiries regarding the unemployment system. (Through the task force subgroup process, state OMJ staff identified efforts either already, or soon to be, initiated to provide county OMJ staff with more access to information.) These included additional training materials, a SharePoint site for county staff, a frequently asked questions document and a private phone number for county staff to contact state unemployment insurance staff for help.

13. Develop a shared file drawer in EDMS, where items such as records, address and pay verifications could be stored and accessible between child support and public assistance workers.

14. Develop "read only access" to EDMS for the verification and sharing of common, core identification documents between all sister programs. (Currently program areas cannot see or share documents scanned by a sister program.) This was one of the biggest needs identified by the counties in the development of the statewide EDMS and would be

extremely beneficial to client services and county eligibility work. This could be accomplished through the creation of an EDMS section that would house common documents needed by the program areas (such as birth certificates, social security verification, proof of residency, etc.).

15. Develop an interface between EDMS and the child protection Traverse systems. (Traverse provides child protection workers with substantial computer tools to provide services and work in the field. Access to the EDMS would significantly enhance the ability to serve families during visits and reduce the amount of time caseworkers spend verifying information already known to the system).

16. Recommend OB data is made available to caseworkers' pre-county custody, while they are investigating and/or working with kinship placements. (Currently, OB information is only available **after** the county has custody of a child, but not when a caseworker is conducting investigations.) Information in the OB system could be vital to the case in multiple ways, including the health and safety of family and workers, reducing placement in foster care and enhancing kinship placements and securing additional federal dollars to support the case.

17. Recommend cross training county staff, so they can properly understand and secure data across programs. ODJFS will put together a monitoring process to help ensure accountability for functions that currently exist.

Appendix

- Overview of Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Systems – Presented on December 7, 2021 at the task force meeting.

[PDF] Task Force on Streamlining County L

- Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Systems Interface Crosswalk Diagrams

[PDF] County Streamlining Cross Walk_All Tables

[PDF] County Streamlining Cross Walk_SACWIS.p

[PDF] County Streamlining Cross Walk_OWCMS.p

[PDF] County Streamlining Cross Walk_UC.pdf

[PDF] County Streamlining Cross Walk_SETS.pdf