The IV-A/IV-D Interface and Data Exchange: A Report of Survey Findings

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Executive Summary

Purpose

The Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), working with the Office of Family Assistance (OFA), undertook an analysis examining the exchange of case-related data between the Child Support Enforcement (CSE) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs at the State level. The primary purpose of the task was to inventory common data elements that are currently shared between the programs and to better understand the electronic interfaces currently in place that facilitate data sharing.

This report is intended to assist the State IV-A and IV-D agencies in exchanging data by:

Part 1- Summarizing research into the current data exchange and collecting information on best practices and lessons learned;

Part 2 - Summarizing the discussion topics and recommendations from a representative workgroup of Federal and State staff that met in Washington DC, in May 2004.

This report focuses on an effort to analyze the 29 data elements cited in Action Transmittal 89-09 and makes suggestions for updates in terminology, definitions, and transaction formats. This is not intended as a mandate on either program regarding the data elements, definitions, or transaction formats for this exchange of information between TANF and Child Support Enforcement. This effort is simply a response to requests made during both the research/interview and workgroup phases for more guidance in this area.

Introduction

OCSE contracted with the State Information Technology Consortium (SITC) to complete a study examining the exchange of case-related data between the CSE and TANF programs at the State level. The primary purpose of the task is to inventory common data elements that are currently shared between the programs and to better understand the electronic interfaces currently in place that facilitate data sharing. The study also seeks to identify impediments related to data exchange and to cite specific examples of technical solutions implemented by States to circumvent them.

Objectives

In July 2003, OCSE issued a Dear Colleague Letter (DCL)[1] to State IV-A and IV-D Directors urging that effective linkages be established to ensure that "regular interaction" occurred to "provide optimum customer service" and achieve State performance measures.[2] The letter included several examples of collaborative strategies initiated by different State or local governments that increased the level of planning and/or collaboration between TANF intake staff and IV-D caseworkers.

DCL-03-28 addresses the topic of collaboration primarily in non technical terms. For instance, examples of best practices highlighted in the letter include co-location of staff or joint applicant interview processing. Interaction refers primarily to the sharing of custodial parent and noncustodial parent demographic, historical, and support order data.

Recent studies prepared on this topic tend to focus mainly on the programmatic issues and less on the technical issues. Some studies include a brief discussion highlighting the technical factors involved. However, none of the studies examine the interface from a primarily technical perspective. So what of the technical supports in place facilitating interaction and collaboration? The objective of this study is to examine the data that is being shared and highlight collaborative approaches within the context of information technology.

State representatives participating in the survey were asked to describe their experiences in terms of:

- the data elements involved in the interface between IV-D and IV-A systems[3];
- electronic mechanisms of information exchange;
- technical solutions that facilitate or improve information exchange; and
- technical collaboration.

The results of this study will be made available to other States so that they can benefit from their peers' experiences.

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[1] OCSE DCL-03-28. See Appendix A for the complete text.

[2] The five State performance measures are: Paternity Establishment; Support Order Establishment; Current Collections; Arrearage Collections; and Cost Effectiveness. Refer to 45 CFR Ch. III, Part 305.2 Performance Measures (Federal Register, 10-1-2001 Edition) for more information.

[3] Action Transmittal OCSE-AT-89-09 *Revised Minimum Data Elements Required for Certifiable FAMIS and CSE Systems Interface* was used as the baseline for this analysis. Refer to Appendix B for the complete text.

Background

Title IV-D of the Social Security Act of 1975 authorized States to create a CSE office, and since that time, IV-D programs have shared information with their IV-A counterparts.[4] Although both programs have undergone varying degrees of reform over time, the necessity for collaboration has not diminished.

The Family Support Act of 1988 established minimum requirements for comprehensive, statewide automated systems supporting IV-D program activity. Furthermore, it required the system to automatically accept and process referrals from the IV-A agency.[5] Initially, IV-D referral data was mainly processed using paper forms; now the information is transmitted both electronically and via paper. In some cases, States have discontinued the use of paper altogether. This trend will most likely continue into the near future.

The enactment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) introduced significant opportunities and challenges for both programs, including new requirements for additional databases and interfaces.[6] One of the key concepts introduced in the landmark legislation was promoting self-sufficiency. With the introduction of the TANF 60-month benefit time limit, State assistance programs were pressed to help clients achieve a sufficient and stable level of income that would enable them to first reduce and eventually eliminate dependence on a monthly assistance check. Because many assistance cases involved single-parent households that received little to no financial support from the absent parent, one of the strategies to emerge from PRWORA was to increase the level of collaboration between TANF and CSE programs.

Information technology provides a means to effectively and efficiently increase information sharing and collaboration between two or more parties. Given that local-level staff from each program are often times not collocated, automation is the primary tool relied upon by caseworkers to communicate key pieces of case data.

OCSE, in response to the Family Support Act legislation, issued Action Transmittal (AT) 89-09 in May 1989 detailing the minimum set of data elements to be exchanged via an interface between certified Family Assistance Management Information Systems (FAMIS) and CSE systems. Fifteen years have passed since those data requirements were first issued. Given that significant programmatic changes have occurred and that State governments have

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[4] Farrel, Mary, Asaph Glosser, and Karen Gardiner. *Child Support and TANF Interaction: Literature Review*. The Lewin Group, under subcontract to Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, April 11, 2003

[5] Turestsky, Vicki. *Child Support Computer Systems: A Summary of Current and Proposed Federal Requirements.* Center for Law and Social Policy. August 1996.

[6] Ibid.

become more technically savvy since 1989, the data requirements in AT 89-09, along with some of the significant issues related to their exchange, are examined in this study to discover if any modifications to AT 89-09 are warranted.

Data Standards Registry

In recognition of the increasing opportunities for electronic data exchange, OCSE developed a Data Standards Registry (DSR). The DSR provides useful information about data elements that ensures accurate sharing or exchange of data between multiple parties. Data exchange standards establish common business definitions and facilitate development for electronic exchanges, and are not intended to impact internal system architecture.

As of July 1, 2007, the DSR contains 53 data elements. Each data element has a business term, definition, authoritative source, length, type, and XML tag name. In addition to data elements, supporting information regarding management and access to the DSR is available at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/cse/dsr/ and from the OCSE home page. The "Child Support Enforcement Data Standards Governance Policies and Procedures" document is available on the "Info" page of the DSR. To review an introductory demonstration of the DSR functionality, click on the link from the DSR "Home" page. Please email questions to richard.patterson@acf.hhs.gov.

Urban Academy

The Office of Child Support Enforcement, in cooperation with the Office of Family Assistance, conducted the first of two IV-A/IV-D Academy sessions on June 14-15, 2004, for four urban jurisdictions with the largest caseload: New York City, Houston, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles. The second session was held on April 10-11, 2006, for four Region V jurisdictions, including Chicago, Detroit, Indianapolis, and Cleveland. The purpose of the Academy is to explore operational issues and exchange best practices offering practical solutions, which can be implemented or pilot-tested at these sites.

A number of the issues identified by these jurisdictions are similar to those reported by the States participating in this study. Some examples are: the need to have payment and order screens available to IV-A workers as well as IV-D; to notify IV-A workers when child support obtains an order or when first payment is received; and to have more automated exchange of accurate custodial parent and noncustodial parent information. Continuous training was also identified as a crucial need for IV-A and IV-D workers for sharing information; learning new technologies; and most importantly, for explaining the importance of how IV-A/ IV-D collaborative efforts can improve services for needy families and children.

Improving IV-A and IV-D collaboration is a top Federal priority to bring about a real change for the neediest families. The sites were selected since they have a great potential for impacting large numbers of families and children and for improving State performance/outcomes for both programs. OCSE invited IV-A/IV-D

representatives from each urban jurisdiction to participate in the Academy sessions, which were held in Washington, DC, and Chicago, IL. "A report of IV-A/IV-D Urban Academies: Collaboration Strategies and Promising Practices, Working Better Together for Families and Children," was issued under Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) 07-08 and can be found on the Internet and the OCSE Web site at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pol/DCL/2007/dcl-07-08.htm

Approach

Child support officials from 12 States and Territories[7] were contacted between October and December 2003, and asked to participate in the study; 10 States were ultimately interviewed. Six of the States participating in the study use separate database systems for collecting and storing IV-D and IV-A program data; four States use an integrated database system for program data.[8] In some cases, the IV-D and IV-A agencies are organized within two different State agencies; in most other cases, the programs are organized within the same agency.

Interviews with State-designated representatives included open discussion as well as a series of prepared questions. All participants were asked, during the interview, to submit a list of data elements included in the interface between the IV-D and IV-A database(s). Notes taken during the interview sessions were sent to each State for confirmation.

An assessment of data elements and interview responses took place during January 2004. Follow-up questions were prepared based on the results of the review and delivered to the participants during the same month. Responses are incorporated into the report.

The findings included in this report are based on the information collected during the interviews and the responses participants provided to the post-interview follow-up questions. The technical solutions implemented to support better exchange of case-related data that are presented in this report were reviewed and discussed with members of the IV-A/IV-D Workgroup at the ACF State Systems Summit held in Washington, DC, in May 2004.

[7] States and Territories invited to participate in the survey include Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Washington, and Wisconsin.

[8] Participating States using an integrated database system include Florida, Maryland, Nevada, and Rhode Island.

Part I – Best Practice Automation Findings

Since 1989, the year that AT 89-09 was issued, both the child support and public assistance programs have undergone substantial programmatic transformation. However, the modifications in program scope and purpose that have emerged over the past 15 years have not curtailed the need for information sharing. In fact, there is undoubtedly greater need for collaboration today than in previous years. Because AT 89-09 is limited to addressing the minimum data exchange requirements, it does not provide a complete picture of the actual information shared between IV-A and IV-D systems. Therefore, States were asked to provide a list of the data elements currently shared between their two systems. The list of elements that each State provided was compared to the list of elements provided by other States in an effort to understand the current breadth and depth of the data exchange process. Participating States were also asked for feedback on two topics that come to mind when thinking about data exchange: data accessibility and regulatory restrictions governing data sharing.

States using two separate databases linked by an interface provided a list of data elements involved in the exchange. States using an integrated system supplied copies of the screens that IV-D and IV-A staff use to view data.[9] The elements were recorded in a spreadsheet and linked with the appropriate State(s). Over 180 unique pieces of data besides the elements listed in AT 89-09 were found to be exchanged between the two programs or viewable by the other program's staff.[10] For discussion purposes, the elements were sorted into one of four high-level categories and then grouped into one of several subcategories. The following table lists the categories and subcategories used.

[9] Eight States provided information regarding data elements by the time this report was prepared.

[10] Data refers to either a single element such as Social Security number, or it can refer to a group of like elements such as "name" which is comprised of first name, middle initial, last name data elements. Data elements used for records management or to establish relationships in a household were not included in this study. Examples of such elements might include sequence number, case identification number, member number, etc.

Category	**Applicant/ Head of Household/ Custodian**	**Noncustodial Parent/ Absent Relative**	**Dependent/ Child**	**Order of Support**
Subcategories	Identification/ Demographic Household Status Good Cause Education/ Employment Health Coverage TANF Eligibility/ Benefits	Identification/ Demographic Household Status Education/ Employment Health Coverage Veteran/ Government Status Court/ Criminal Status Other	Identification/ Demographic Household Status Education Health Coverage	(None)

Data Exchange

States with Separate Systems

All six States using separate systems to record and store IV-A and IV-D data provided information about the data elements currently exchanged between their systems.[11] Based on the information in these lists, States in this category are uploading an average of 47 additional data elements from their IV-A system to the IV-D system. These data elements are in addition to what is specified in AT 89-09. The range includes a low of 30 additional elements (Nebraska) to a high of 66 (Wisconsin). Only two States in this group provided information about the data elements uploaded from the IV-D system to the IV-A system. The average number of additional elements uploaded to the IV-A system is 28.

The following table lists the common data elements not listed in AT 89-09 that a majority of States in this group upload from the IV-A system to the IV-D system.[12] Additional identification/demographic type data for the applicant and dependent is exchanged by a majority of States. Good cause information about

[11] All six states in this group provided information about the data elements that are uploaded from the IV-A system to the IV-D system. Only two States provided information about data elements that are uploaded from the IV-D system to the IV-A system.

[12] States in this group did not exchange many of the data elements classified as support order elements.

the applicant and relationship information about the dependent are frequently exchanged. Data pertaining to the identification/demographic and employment of the noncustodial parents are also frequently transmitted.

Common Data Elements Uploaded to the IV-D System by a Majority of States Using Separate Systems		
Applicant	***Noncustodial Parent***	***Dependent***
Sex	Sex	Name
Social Security Number	Telephone Number	Sex
Date of Birth	Employer Name/ID	Social Security Number
Telephone Number	Employer Address	Date of Birth
Cooperation/Good Cause Effective Date(s)	Employer Telephone	
Cooperation/Good Cause Reason Code	Employment Start/Stop Dates	
	Separation/Divorce Date	

As mentioned above, an average of 47 additional elements are uploaded from IV-A systems to IV-D systems. Of these 47 data elements, 17 pertain to the applicant/custodial parent, 15 elements relate to the absent parent, 13 elements are related to the dependent, and 2 elements are related to support orders.

States with Integrated Systems

Two of the four States using an integrated database system for IV-A and IV-D program activity provided copies of the system screens to which workers from each program have access. Based on the data fields found on the screens, these States are sharing an average of 51 additional IV-D-related data elements with IV-A staff and an average of 59 additional IV-A-related data elements with IV-D staff.

It wasn't possible to determine if common elements are shared between IV-A and IV-D programs in this group because of the limited number of States providing the necessary information.

Related Data Exchange Topics

Participants were asked if any data elements are currently collected by one program but not shared with the other that would be useful for meeting programmatic requirements. A majority of States (7 out of 10) indicated that there were none. All States reported that IV-D staff are provided restricted, read-only rights to IV-A system data. Likewise, most States reported that IV-A staff

have some type of restricted access to IV-D system data. Information regarding methods used by staff to access data is discussed further in the Collaboration section of this report in the subsection entitled, "Technical Solutions for Data Access."

States were then asked if there is data not currently collected that would be useful for meeting programmatic requirements. More than half of the respondents indicated that there was data that, if collected, would help. Data cited include paternity information, noncustodial parent driver's license, noncustodial parent American Indian indicator, additional insurance information, medical insurance for the dependent, dependent birth State, and out-of-State orders of support. The six States responding yes to the question each cited different data elements unique to their State.

When asked if regulatory restrictions hamper data sharing, most States indicated that there are limits but nothing that impedes a program from meeting programmatic objectives. Several States indicated that financial information obtained by IV-D from the Internal Revenue Service cannot be shared with IV-A. One State, Washington, stated that it would like to share Financial Institution Data Match information because it could be of value during eligibility determination. Another State, Rhode Island, indicated that it could not share Vital Statistic information collected for IV-D purposes, primarily because the existing law that enables child support to obtain the data (it is written specifically for IV-D) does not include language that permits them to share the data.

Officials from Wisconsin IV-D believe that it is unnecessary to require the support order information from TANF as outlined in AT 89-09. They feel that the custodial parent and noncustodial parent demographic data are the key pieces of data required from IV-A staff, and that this information, when complete and accurate, facilitates the collection of support data by the IV-D caseworker.

Data Quality

It was learned, in the previous section, that States are going beyond the minimum data exchange requirements. It was also discovered that States have built a technical capacity to share information that exceeds the 20-plus elements specified in AT 89-09. But providing a facility for staff to record information and disseminate it to another program does not guarantee that the quality of the data will be satisfactory.[13] So participants were asked for their thoughts concerning data quality. If issues were cited, we also asked for any technical solutions that have been implemented or that are in the process of being developed that serve to improve data quality.

[13] The term "quality" refers to data accuracy and completeness, and how current the data is. These characteristics were extracted from the definition of "reliable data" defined in 45 CFR Ch. III, Part 305.1 Definitions (Federal Register 10-1-2001 Edition).

Data Quality Issues

When participants were asked if the quality of the data being exchanged can be improved, 8 of the 10 replied affirmatively. Participants raised several issues, including data collection errors, minimal data collection, and data maintenance.[14]

Almost all of the participants discussed problems arising from errors made during the data collection process. Topics discussed included the significance of imperfect clearance processing, inaccurate or skipped data entry, and improper coding.

A majority of the participants discussed the effect on the IV-D process when the clearance procedure fails to detect that an applicant is known to the system.[15] In most States, the clearance process is used to check the prior history of the custodial parent (i.e., the applicant). In some States, a system check is also performed on the noncustodial parent if the appropriate search criteria is available.

States reported that inaccurate clearance processing can result in duplicate record creation and additional use of staff time to resolve inconsistencies. Florida stated that the current process requires manual review of the data and unfortunately allows for the creation of duplicate individuals or cases when the review is less than satisfactory. Correction of the duplicative case or individual is complicated and can require programming staff to correct the errors. Florida IV-D is continuing work on identifying fixes to the client registration and clearance process on FLORIDA (the integrated IV-A/IV-D system).

In Maryland, CARES (the IV-A system) is searched for records pertaining to the custodial parent and noncustodial parent. Officials reported that existing case information about a noncustodial parent known to CARES is not always detected during the TANF clearance process. And although IV-D staff are normally able to discover that a noncustodial parent is actually known to CARES, it happens after some time has elapsed and staff resources have been used.

In Nevada, when an application for TANF is entered into the integrated system known as NOMADS, the clerical staff are to determine if any parties currently exist in the system. If one or more of the parties exist, the staff are supposed to determine if the application would result in a new case due to a change in participants, or if the application refers to all parties in an existing case. Rather than do this person search/resolution process, clerical staff are creating pseudo cases which then require a merge later on.

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[14] Data maintenance refers to the process of updating the database with the most current information available.

[15] During TANF application processing, a search is conducted in the IV-A database to determine if the applicant is known to the system (i.e., finding system records associated with the applicant). Some States will also check the database for records related to the noncustodial parent. Search criteria normally includes Social Security number, last name, and/or first name. The activity is generally known as the clearance process.

Wisconsin IV-D stated the desire for TANF workers to be more consistent while validating custodial parent Social Security numbers when staff seek to determine if the applicant is known to the IV-A system, CARES. TANF staff also may collect the noncustodial parent Social Security number. A positive identification provides important case history data that enables child support to determine support order status. It also helps to prevent duplicate records for the same custodial or noncustodial parent.

Clearance process issues are not the only concern during data collection. For example, if TANF staff record IV-D information on a paper form, and then later data enter the information into the system, errors can also occur. Louisiana considers that the amount of data found on the paper referral is superior to the electronic referral and also more reliable because TANF staff either make data entry errors or they skip entering data found on the paper form. Montana and Pennsylvania reported experiencing similar problems.

A study conducted by Pennsylvania IV-D found that many data collection errors were a result of worker mistakes, the two most common being incorrect data/missing data and incorrect coding on the part of IV-A intake staff. Pennsylvania was not the only State to cite the coding problem; most States indicated that they currently experience or previously experienced problems with inaccurate coding.[16] Washington, for example, mentioned that both IV-A and IV-D staff can make errors when coding.

Another significant issue discussed by many participants involves the extent of the data collection effort during the client interview process. In general, participants citing this issue expressed frustration that sometimes a minimal amount of data is collected. For example, Maryland has found that many times TANF staff only collect a minimum amount of information about the noncustodial parent, enough to generate the electronic referral. Nebraska also reported that sometimes minimal data is collected about the noncustodial parent. Rhode Island cited insufficient noncustodial parent data collection, but not on the part of TANF workers ("they have been doing it longer"), but rather when Medicaid staff collect the data.

Washington IV-D reported that, prior to the redesign of its interface, TANF workers were reluctant to enter child support data that duplicated the paper referral form used for data collection and did not follow or match the associated data entry fields in ACES (the IV-A system).

Florida IV-D stated that even though the data fields exist, public assistance staff rarely complete the screens related to child support obligations. Public assistance staff might not take the opportunity to ask the questions provided on the system that would contribute to child support's ability to obtain an order for support.

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[16] Coding refers to the IV-D status assigned to the case by the TANF worker; it is important because it often triggers the IV-D process. For example, a specific code may indicate there is a noncustodial parent and cause an electronic referral to be generated.

Another interesting issue introduced by some of the participants involves data maintenance. Maintenance refers to the process of updating the database with new information about a custodial or noncustodial parent as it becomes available. This is significant because the program with the most current and accurate data source should theoretically have the ability to update the database. Furthermore, since the enactment of PRWORA, State IV-D programs have increased the number of interfaces with other State and Federal databases that provide access to the most current information.

Rhode Island IV-A and IV-D are currently talking about this important data quality issue in regards to custodial parent information. In particular, IV-D is requesting update rights from IV-A for the custodial parent address. IV-D has access to the most current address information because of an interface with the State's new hire database (whose data is updated three times a week). TANF currently has sole ownership of the address data, but IV-D is talking with IV-A officials about instituting dual ownership of custodial parent address data.

Nevada reported a similar issue involving the noncustodial parent address. Nevada CSE receives current address data via several interfaces with various statewide databases. However, because TANF and Food Stamps collect this address information from the custodial parent during client contact, the three programs were continually in the process of verifying the most up-to-date data. They resolved the issue by establishing rules governing data ownership. If the person at issue is a noncustodial parent on a IV-D case, the IV-D worker is given update access to the data. If the person at issue is a child or a custodial parent on a TANF case, the TANF workers have update authority to the information. If a caseworker who does not have update ability has information he/she feels is important to the case, he/she can make a contact entry in the case and alert the worker to the new information.

Factors Influencing Data Quality

Interview participants identified and discussed several different factors that often influence the degree of data quality. More often than not, multiple factors simultaneously contribute to substandard data collection.

It was previously stated that data entry error accounts for some problems. Some States opt to use purely electronic forms of data collection during the client interview, bypassing paper forms altogether. Most States in the survey continue to use paper forms to collect client information and subsequently enter the data into the system after the interview. Data entry is sometimes performed by the caseworker and other times by data entry staff. There appears to be greater opportunity for data entry errors to occur when information is entered into the system from a paper form as opposed to direct entry into the system during the

client interview. [17] Three of the four States that use direct entry as the sole or primary referral method (see section below entitled "Technical Solutions for Improving Data Quality") did not report data entry error problems.

Participants highlighted several different root causes for incomplete data collection. Insufficient time was frequently cited as a factor. Local district TANF staff in particular are often under pressure to meet all the data collection requirements for eligibility determination and run out of time for thorough IV-D data collection. Louisiana remarked that there are multiple demands on IV-A workers, and subsequently they do not always give IV-D data collection priority. Another cause closely related to lack of time is insufficient staff resources. Nebraska staff, for example, stated the opinion that the biggest hurdle regarding quality data collection in their State seems to be time and resource constraints. This problem can be particularly acute in offices located in the larger urban centers or jurisdictions where there tends to be a higher staff turnover rate. Inadequate staffing levels normally result in larger caseloads per caseworker, thereby reducing time available per case.

A common factor often repeated by participants suggests that TANF staff simply do not understand why child support data is collected and how it is used, or why it is their responsibility to collect it. Florida remarked that TANF staff do not consider the collection of information and data for child support purposes as a IV-A activity. Pennsylvania observed that most TANF staff do not receive any training about the interface, PACSES (the IV-D system), or child support in general, and that many times IV-A staff simply do not understand the importance of some of the information in terms of being able to process a referral. Sometimes, they do not know they are responsible for collecting some of the data required for case processing. Pennsylvania IV-D instituted a training program for TANF staff that has helped to reduce the error rate. Louisiana suggested that more training that explains the benefits of IV-D data collection and how the data collected from the IV-A applicant is used is required to improve data quality. They are currently developing materials for this purpose.

A few States cited technical issues that affected data quality. Maryland staff suggested that the clearance process problem in their State could be improved if the CARES (IV-A module) indexing function used by TANF staff to detect if a noncustodial parent is known to the system was upgraded. Louisiana reported that, in the past, system modifications to the IV-A system (L'AMI) have caused problems with some of the data exchanged between the programs. Child support did not become aware of the problem until months after the system change.

Washington IV-D found, during the redesign of its referral and interface functionality, that minor technical issues had to be resolved, including data

[17] Statistics supporting this statement were not available. However, it is reasonable to expect that there is less opportunity for entry errors to occur when the recording process has one step (i.e., directly into the system) as opposed to two steps (i.e., record data on paper, then into the system).

definitions, file upload logistics, and document imaging. IV-A scans important documents that are used by IV-D staff; IV-A and IV-D use different imaging technologies, so access rights had to be considered and resolved.

Finally, potential for coding errors exists if the system does not adequately support code definition lookup functionality. Pennsylvania explained that the IV-A system, CIS, has field-level help, but not for all fields, and an error message is provided only if an invalid code is used, not necessarily an incorrect code. And although CIS provides lookup capability for codes, it only provides a definition of the code and not a description. Tools are available to help staff find a more thorough description, but they involve jumping out of the application and going to an online manual, etc.

Technical Solutions for Improving Data Quality

States identified a number of significant factors that hinder the exchange of quality data and cited some of the causes for them. But what about solutions that have been implemented or are in the process of being developed to ensure that an acceptable level of data quality is maintained?

Participants talked about technically based solutions that their States have employed to negate the effects of these factors. A variety of approaches have been designed and implemented to counteract the issues previously described. The particular approach that any single State adopts will be influenced by circumstances such as the nature of the problem, resources, time, and urgency. For instance, sometimes a technical approach is favored, sometimes a training-based method is preferred, and other times the process is reviewed and modified. Some of the solutions that individual States have initiated are described in the paragraphs below.

Multiple approaches have been devised by States to improve data collection and entry. Several States talked about the negative results that occur when the clearance process fails to detect that an applicant is known to the IV-A system. Nebraska stated that N-FOCUS, the IV-A system, incorporates resolution functionality that assists TANF workers to determine if the applicant already exists in the system. Nevada IV-D discussed that it is currently in the process of creating a new person search/person resolution function to improve clearance process results. Wisconsin IV-A is also in the process of designing new client lookup functionality in CARES (the IV-A system); the goal is to improve staff ability to determine if the applicant is known to the system.

Rhode Island developed a potential duplicate case report that is issued monthly. The report identifies cases where noncustodial parents have more than one Social Security number associated with the same custodial parent, have last names that are phonetically the same, have first initials that are equal and are the same sex. Systems staff then merge the cases or make corrections as needed. The system also automatically pops up a potential match screen when the name and other identifying information potentially matches with someone already in the system (both on the TANF/Medicaid/Child Care side and on the IV-D side).

Reducing the reliance on a dual system of paper and electronic referrals may help improve data collection and shrink data entry errors. Washington redesigned its referral module and ultimately eliminated paper forms because the data quality of the electronic method met or surpassed the paper method. For a period of 6 months after implementing the e-referral module, IV-D technical staff compared the data quality of the paper form with the e-referral. It was discovered that, over time, approximately 65 percent of the e-referrals provided as good or better data than the paper referrals, so it was decided that paper was no longer required. IV-A and IV-D continue to explore strategies to improve the quality of data further.

When Florida implemented its integrated system in 1991, the use of paper referrals was discontinued. Currently, IV-D data is entered during the TANF interactive interview with the applicant. In Nebraska, TANF staff also have the option of collecting data from the applicant using an interactive interview that involves direct data entry into N-FOCUS or by recording information on paper forms and data entering later; the method of data entry used varies by location. Wisconsin IV-D reports that the referral process is almost exclusively electronic; paper referrals are almost never used. IV-A staff collect information from the applicant and enter the data directly into CARES.[18]

Pennsylvania IV-D, in an effort to reduce coding-related errors, revisited the set of codes in use and discovered that there were duplicates in terms of the "net effect" (i.e., an indicator designating if the noncustodial parent is present in the household). Pennsylvania was able to reduce the number of codes that workers need to use since IV-D was only concerned about noncustodial parent household status indicator. Louisiana, using a similar approach with the State's Medicaid agency, reduced the number of codes used to indicate the child's legal status.

Montana is currently working on a system enhancement to TEAMS (the IV-A system) that will address the issue concerning inaccurate or miscoded information. After the enhancement is implemented, TEAMS will verify the accuracy of case codes based on other information that is collected from the client.

INRHODES, the integrated TANF and CSE system used in Rhode Island, was designed with online help for data fields. The help system provides information about the data field and also about available codes if applicable. Furthermore, both IV-A and IV-D staff have access to policy information at any time online.

Some of the participants talked about system or process redesign efforts that were previously implemented or are being considered. Last year, Washington implemented a redesign of the electronic referral interface between the IV-A and

[18] Note that some States, Montana for instance, have discussed eliminating the paper referral but cannot because of legal and process barriers preventing it from happening. In Montana's case, the paper referral is a requirement because it records the client's signature verifying agreement to assign their rights to all support collected from the noncustodial parent to the State.

IV-D systems. The primary reason for this redesign was that the IV-A system, ACES, came from another State whose program requirements differed from those in Washington. ACES had to be significantly modified to encompass Washington's IV-A program, including the referral module to the IV-D agency. For example, many of the data fields in ACES were not mandatory nor even used by the IV-D system, SEMS, so there would be no place to download the data. Furthermore, the number of ACES screens and data fields for the IV-D referral that existed at the time created a significant workload issue. In the end, the referral redesign reduced the fields from multiple screens to one screen including the federally mandated fields as specified in OCSE AT 89-09.

Florida reported future plans for a project that will automate up-front applicant IV-D cooperation determination at the time of the public assistance interview. Child support hopes to implement a checklist that the TANF worker will use while collecting information from the applicant about the noncustodial parent. The enhancement would also permit IV-D to automatically update the client cooperation indicator on the TANF screen.

Nebraska is in the process of making enhancements to its IV-A to IV-D referral. One new feature will include a pop-up window pertaining to the noncustodial parent address that is triggered when the noncustodial parent is added to the IV-A system, N-FOCUS, due to his/her role in the IV-D referral. Data entry will not be mandatory. However, it is hoped that the window will increase the chance that the worker will provide the information if it is known. Nebraska is also adding a text field so the worker can add the names of other alleged fathers or other pertinent data to alert the IV-D worker to watch for the required paperwork. Nebraska also remarked that other potential enhancements to the N-FOCUS system would facilitate the TANF worker's ability to collect and record information, such as modifications to screen flows or the sequence in which data is collected on an individual screen.

Regarding the problem of minimal data collection, some States discussed interesting technical approaches that potentially offer relief. In Maryland, the IV-A system CARES is designed so that TANF staff are required to enter a minimum set of IV-D-related information for the electronic referral to be generated and the TANF eligibility determination process to proceed.

Similarly, Montana IV-D is currently working on an enhancement to TEAMS with IV-A technical staff that will address the issue of missing data by requiring that the IV-A worker enter a minimum set of IV-D data prior to TANF benefit issuance. If some or all of the data is missing, benefits cannot be issued, although eligibility determination can still be conducted.

When the referral process involves both the electronic and paper form method, problems can arise if, for any individual case, there isn't a corresponding paper form for the electronic referral, and vice versa. Several States have developed methods to either better understand the scope of the problem or safeguard against it.

Pennsylvania IV-D developed a database that tracked all referrals coming from IV-A. After being logged in the database, the IV-D staff would attempt to process each referral in PACSES. The disposition of each referral logged in the database was accounted for. Referrals that were processed successfully were noted in the database. Referrals that were not successfully processed were marked and the problem noted. Some referrals in the database were deleted, but only after being approved by the Commonwealth PACSES staff.

In Nebraska, the N-FOCUS system creates comparison reports that identify active TANF cases without a IV-D referral to ensure that there is a corresponding referral for each applicable TANF case. IV-A sends an alert to the TANF case worker to remind him/her if the IV-D referral has not been sent. And the Washington e-referral daily file is brought into a Web-based interim system that IV-D staff use to manually cross reference and modify existing cases in SEMS or to create new cases.

Training Solutions for Improving Data Quality

Some States have implemented a training approach that targets data collection and entry staff instead of, or in addition to, incorporating a technical solution. Pennsylvania IV-D developed a training program for the County Assistance Office's Income Maintenance staff in an effort to reduce errors. The training includes a PowerPoint presentation and Word document that provide information about the interface, the data being collected, and the reason for the data collection (i.e., how it helps the IV-D process). The training also includes a real-time, hands-on demonstration with PACSES so that TANF workers can get a feel for the system.

Florida believes that training IV-A staff on the importance of collecting and entering correct information is critical. The State offers training for staff in both IV-A and IV-D programs to reaffirm the importance of entering correct data into the system the first time and every time. Washington IV-D technical staff developed a training class, in conjunction with IV-A training staff, that targets specific offices or staff that experience data quality issues. Training has been targeted for both IV-A and IV-D staff regarding issues such as Good Cause/Domestic Violence and how to code this, and the appropriate actions to take on cases where these issues are in play.

Training can also be a useful tool for increasing awareness about the importance of data collection efforts. Pennsylvania noted that sometimes IV-A staff do not know they are responsible for collecting some of the data required for IV-D case processing, and remarked that the training program has helped to reduce the error rate. Nebraska acknowledged that IV-A staff in some jurisdictions would probably improve on their data collection efforts if they receive additional training regarding how IV-D data is used and explanations regarding coding, etc. As mentioned previously, Florida continues to provide training that stresses the

importance of data collection. And Rhode Island IV-D has provided training for its staff that addresses, for example, why paternity data is needed; the offer to train TANF and Medicaid staff on the topic has been extended to program officials.

Collaboration

One of the participants in the study offered the opinion that the requirements mandated in PRWORA were in fact a catalyst for greater collaboration between the programs in his State. He explained that PRWORA had a significant impact on the need for communication between IV-D and IV-A, as well as with other departments. Issues such as data reliability, medical support, and the TANF 5-year maximum, as well as better defined regulations regarding cooperation, good cause, domestic violence, and data sharing necessitated a higher level of communication than what existed at the time.

The topic of TANF and CSE collaboration routinely involves discussion citing strategies and methods that have been implemented to facilitate interaction between program staff at the State or local level, or interaction between the case worker and client. Many papers and conferences highlight strategies that States have implemented to improve program collaboration such as collocating staff at local district sites, cross-training staff, creating coordinator positions, etc. When thinking about collaboration in the context of information technology, a couple of topics come to mind. First, how do technical staff from each program collaborate to ensure that the software development life cycles are synchronized and that programmatic needs are adequately supported? Second, what technical strategies have been adopted to facilitate and enhance the sharing of information between programs?

Technical Staff Collaboration Practices

All 10 States reported that staff from both programs were involved in the design and development of the integrated system or the interface between separate systems. More than half of the States stated that technical staff meet routinely to discuss IT problems concerning the interface or other related technical issues. Sometimes program staff participate in these technical meetings. All the States felt that regularly scheduled contact improved communication and collaboration.

Montana commented that CSE and TANF technical staff hold regular informational meetings where issues involving the interface and collaboration are discussed and resolved. During the informational meetings, the best solution to the problem is determined and responsibility for managing the task is assigned. Wisconsin described a similar communication process but with the addition of program representatives. Technical and programmatic staff from both IV-D and IV-A meet routinely to highlight changes in program requirements or planned system upgrades. Wisconsin reported that the IV-A/IV-D Tech Group meetings help to increase the level of planning and collaboration between the two programs. Likewise, Florida IV-D technical staff conduct regularly scheduled

formal meetings with TANF program and systems staff to discuss technical issues of interest to both programs.

Nebraska IV-A and IV-D conduct organized focus groups that meet routinely, approximately once a month. During the focus groups, which include local-district TANF and CSE staff, participants are asked to identify problems and potential enhancements to either N-FOCUS or CHARTS. Subsequently, ideas for improving the interface are generated from these sessions.

Washington IV-D has designated "IV-A Liaisons" in each of the field offices who serve as the local system experts. These staff help to identify problems at the local level and do an assessment before passing it along to headquarters IT staff. These liaisons also help to disseminate information about problems or enhancements that are proposed. Often these liaisons are involved in work groups for proposed enhancements (doing a pilot in one of the offices before implementing statewide).

Rhode Island thought that implementing an integrated system was the most significant strategy that increased technical collaboration. As an example, it commented that child support voluntarily provides all of its new hire data to IV-A, as allowed through PRWORA regulations, to help the TANF program combat welfare fraud. The exchange of data was easy to facilitate because the systems are integrated and the required system changes straightforward.

Maryland, which also uses an integrated system, reports several interesting strategies that improve collaboration. Like other States, IV-A and IV-D staff meet routinely to discuss changes to the Client Information System (CIS). However, technical staff responsible for each of the IV-A and IV-D modules in CIS are also collocated, thus fostering day-to-day communication. Technical staff have also established an interface workgroup that meets quarterly to discuss issues and solutions. Maryland also commented that IV-D and IV-A programs provided at least one representative to participate on CSES (the IV-D module) and CARES (the IV-A module) design teams. Program representatives were required to approve the system specifications before the development phase could begin.

Maryland also utilized the services of a single vendor to design and program both CARES and CSES. This provided the opportunity for some of the programming staff of the CARES module development team to also participate in the CSES module team. And like Rhode Island, a single vendor is utilized for system maintenance and upgrade services for CIS. Both IV-A and IV-D staff participate in any system maintenance involving the electronic referral.

Finally, Florida is one of two States in the survey whose IV-A and IV-D programs are organized within different agencies. Previously, the programs were organized within a single agency. Florida commented that communication and collaboration can sometimes be a challenge, particularly if an issue affecting one program does not have the same degree of importance for the other program. Rhode Island's programs were also once organized within a single agency but now are separated. It reported that initially, after the separation, collaboration was hindered until

lines of communication and operational collaboration specifics were resolved in Memorandums of Agreement established between the two agencies.

Technical Solutions for Data Access

The basic method of electronic data exchange is the system interface required by the Family Support Act legislation and discussed in AT 89-09. The interface is just one of many requirements that has to be met for FAMIS and CSE system certification. But other data exchange methods exist, and most of the States interviewed reported that staff from each program have some level of restricted, read-only access to the other's data.

In States like Maryland or Florida, integrated IV-A/IV-D systems provide access to screens used by the other program; entry is regulated by some type of system security module that grants access rights based on a number of factors. In Rhode Island, for example, access to various screens and modules is limited on a need-to-know basis through various system security measures (who the individual is, where he/she works, his/her role in the system, etc.). In Nevada, IV-A and IV-D currently view the information in the integrated database using different screens, each designed exclusively for use by a particular program. Nevada TANF and CSE staff are in the process of jointly developing screens to which both IV-A and IV-D will have access.

Several different methods are employed by program staff in States using separate systems to view the other's data. In Nebraska, IV-A staff have restricted access to CHARTS (the IV-D system) case data using interface screens developed for N-FOCUS (the IV-A system) users as well as other staff such as Clerks of the District Courts and Title Companies. In Pennsylvania and Washington, IV-D staff are provided query access to the TANF system data.[19] In Montana, child support staff have read-only access to TEAMS, the TANF system; IV-D workers can view nearly all of the TEAMS screens. IV-D workers are granted access to the TANF system based upon security guidelines and specifications. Once a IV-D position is identified as needing access to IV-A data and has been granted rights, the worker logs onto the mainframe system then selects the TEAMS system from a customized menu.

In an interesting use of Web-based technology, Pennsylvania discovered that a portal developed to provide child support clients online access to case-specific data also offers utility to local district TANF workers. A limited number of local district TANF workers are granted access rights to the IV-D system to ensure sufficient system response time and because 80 percent of the IV-D caseload is non-TANF. However, TANF clients periodically come in with an issue concerning child support, and access to IV-D case information (such as financial information) is required to resolve the issue. Limiting the number of staff with system access presents a challenge when a client raises such an issue and staff

[19] Note that select IV-D staff in Pennsylvania have query access to the TANF system.

with access rights are not available, thus inhibiting the worker's ability to respond adequately. To solve this dilemma, IV-D provided all IV-A staff access to the Web-based portal. TANF staff now use the portal, known as the Child Support Web Site, to gain access to necessary client information and are better able to respond to IV-D-related issues in a more timely manner.

Other Related Findings

Distinctions Between Large and Small Jurisdictions

Counties with large populations, particularly those with sizeable urban centers, tend to have bigger IT budgets. But does this mean they have greater technical capacity and therefore more sophisticated data collection or exchange mechanisms in place than other jurisdictions? States were asked if any distinctions exist between larger jurisdictions and smaller to medium-sized jurisdictions.

In terms of technical capability, none of the States indicated any difference between large and small areas. Maryland reported that all jurisdictions operate on the same statewide system. Montana stated that it does not distinguish between large, medium, or small jurisdictions; all jurisdictions are treated the same. Most States responded similarly. However, a majority of States reported that significant operational differences can exist.

Several participants commented that smaller and medium-sized jurisdictions tend to have less staff turnover, which means that the workers collecting data have greater experience and knowledge. Maryland stated that there is greater turnover of TANF staff in larger jurisdictions so there is less experience, on average, among workers as compared to staff in smaller to medium-sized jurisdictions. As a result, lack of experience can lead to greater errors (for example, when coding). Furthermore, new staff do not receive training about the IV-D program or the electronic referral. Therefore, a greater number of staff in larger jurisdictions generally do not have a good understanding of why they are collecting the data or the importance of the noncustodial parent information for the child support process. Several other States also mentioned that lack of training about IV-D hindered the data collection process.

There also seems to be greater collaboration between IV-A and IV-D staff in smaller jurisdictions. Florida reported that whenever TANF and CSE offices are collocated in the smaller rural areas, there is more interaction between the TANF and CSE staff. Caseworkers from TANF and CSE tend to share case information and collaborate more on their respective cases. This results in more accurate case data, which ultimately results in correct and timely case handling.

Participants also pointed to the fact that staff in larger jurisdictions tend to have bigger caseloads and therefore less time to spend with individual clients, and that can hamper thorough data collection. One State mentioned that there seemed to be more commitment among staff in smaller jurisdictions. Another State

expressed the belief that staff in smaller localities were more consistent and accurate.

Regulatory Requirements Concerning Data Collection and Sharing

Some States expressed comments or opinions related to data exchange requirements during the interview. Two States, Wisconsin and Louisiana, remarked that they have been unable to find legislation that specifies the data elements that IV-D or IV-A are required to provide. Wisconsin noted that staff have been unable to locate legislative, regulatory, or system certification requirements concerning the data TANF agencies must provide to IV-D. This appears to be due to the fact that TANF is now a block grant and requirements for a statewide IV-A program are no longer applicable.

Louisiana IV-D expressed particular interest in obtaining any regulations specifying data sharing requirements because it is involved in the analysis of a "One-Stop" concept that would implement an integrated approach to the delivery of the State's primary human services programs. One topic recently researched concerns the extent to which programs can share data with each other. IV-D has been unable to find any legislation that provides specific data elements that IV-A requires to administer its program. The only data elements clearly identified that have been found to date are specified in AT 89-09, the certification guide, and those related to FPLS. Program officials also mentioned that they have restrictions on sharing information obtained from other State agencies and some Federal data sources. The information shared with the IV-D agency is restricted and may be used only for the purposes of establishing and enforcing support.

The legislative authority for child support can be found in 42 USC 652 Duties of the Secretary, which establish standards for State programs and 42 USC 654(4), which outlines State Child Support Enforcement plan requirements (Note: the requirements specifically reference TANF referrals to child support).

Relevant regulations include 45 CFR 303.2(a)(2) & 3(b), which addresses State AFDC/TANF cases referred to the State child support agency, 45 CFR 307.10(b)(14), which addresses the use of automated processes to assist the State in meeting State plan amendments, and 45 CFR 302.85, which addresses mandatory computerized support enforcement systems.

Also available is the OCSE guideline entitled, "Automated Systems for Child Support Enforcement: A Guide for States."

Finally, OCSE, in its response to comments to the final rules on computerized support enforcement systems, Federal Register August 21, 1998 (Volume 63, Page 44795-44817), provided a chart detailing who has access to FPLS information, for what purposes, how to gain access, what information is available and any exceptions. In the Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) for Data Safeguards, published in the Federal Register on October 14, 2005, the NPRM

reiterates that IV-A agencies have access to information in the Statewide Child Support Enforcement system, as well as information from the National Directory of New Hires and Federal Case Registry, without the need to verify the data provided by child support.

Identifying Recommendations and Best Practices

The preceding sections of this report provide information about the data shared between State TANF and CSE programs and highlight important issues concerning the data collection and exchange processes. State participants have shared valuable information about the challenges they've confronted and technical solutions they've implemented to reduce error rates and improve data quality.

Part II – IV-A/IV-D Workgroup

In May 2004, a workgroup comprised of State-level TANF and Child Support Enforcement representatives convened in Washington, DC, to discuss the report findings and make recommendations concerning Best Practices and next steps.

The topics discussed by the IVA/IVD workgroup included: data elements, amount of data exchanged, communication, training, systems controls, characteristics of best practices, and the TANF clearance process.

Discussion Topic: Do the data element requirements defined in AT 89-09 need to be modified?

- The group reviewed AT 89-09 and the IV-A/IV-D report findings on data exchange.
- Some participants suggested that ACF could include clarification (i.e., additional information) for some of the data element definitions.
- The group agreed that the current list of data elements, including the exchange specifications, is sufficient.
- Members also discussed the challenges of sharing certain data, such as some of the IRS data and Financial Institution information. There appear to be "competing controls" placed on accessing and sharing this type of data.
- Some participants discussed the benefits of interstate new hire data. New hire data is an excellent source of current noncustodial parent data (e.g., income, address). Access to this information from other States would assist caseworkers.
- A participant discussed the liabilities that a program (for example, IV-A) can incur if the data is pushed to a database but not used by the field staff. This sets up a potential audit problem if the data is not being accessed by the caseworker.

Recommendation: ACF should consider adding additional clarification to definitions of the data elements identified in Action Transmittal 89-09. The minimum data element list and transfer requirements outlined in AT 89-09 are sufficient; no modifications are required. **Follow-up**: See DCL-06-33.

Recommendation: ACF should communicate the value of interstate access to new hire data. ACF recommendations regarding interstate data access should include consideration of potential audit concerns involved with pushing data to caseworkers who subsequently do not use the data. Follow-up: In December 2005, following a pilot with the District of Columbia, OCSE implemented a data exchange between State IV-A agencies and the National Directory of New Hires.

Follow-up: There are distinct regulations that address the use of Federal tax data for different phases of the TANF assistance lifecycle (i.e., application, screening, eligibility determination, etc.). DCL-04-04, issued jointly by OCSE and Family Assistance, provides guidance regarding permissible tax data use during the child support enforcement process and TANF eligibility determination process. See http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pol/DCL/2004/dcl-04-04.htm .

Discussion Topic: Would the amount of data collected by IV-A affect IV-D program performance? More data does not necessarily mean that program outputs and outcomes will improve. Wisconsin suggested that less data could be collected by IV-A staff and program goals could still be achieved.

- States discussed recent efforts to reduce the amount of data collected or to limit data collection to one screen. None of the States reported any improvements in data collection efforts as a result of reduced/limited data collection.

Recommendation: No recommendations at this time.

Discussion Topic: What level of communication between IV-A and IV-D technical and programmatic staff is optimal?

- Participants discussed the advantages of collocating staff such as State systems personnel or field-level workers from each program in the same work area. Proximity increases communication and collaboration.
- Participants agreed that formal, routine meetings to exchange technical and programmatic information and resolve issues were highly beneficial.
- Informal communication can be equally effective, but relationships need to be built.
- Some States routinely involve field-level (i.e., system user) participation or input. Different participatory mechanisms were cited, including system user meetings (Nebraska) and use of liaisons located in field offices that serve as points of contact (Washington).

Recommendation: The workgroup recommended that States should ensure that program and technical staff representing both programs should meet periodically and suggested a quarterly basis. Participants should include management and field-level staff.

Recommendation: The workgroup participants recommended that States should encourage their field-level offices to establish IV-A/IV-D liaisons. Liaisons serve as a point of contact for other field staff and central office technical staff. The liaison needs to be knowledgeable about both IV-A and IV-D systems, and program processes.

Recommendation: OCSE and OFA should document communication mechanisms currently used by States and identify Best Practices. Practices should include both technically based methods and non technical options.

Discussion Topic: What recommendations, if any, should be made regarding the use of training to improve data collection efforts and reducing error rates?

- The group discussed one of the biggest challenges for improving data collection -- increasing awareness of both TANF and CSE workers about the value of client-level data to the child support and TANF eligibility processes.
- The group discussed the need for and value of "big picture" training. New workers particularly need to understand the assistance lifecycle and how programs like child support help a client realize the ultimate goal of self-sufficiency.
- Discussion also focused on the value of providing feed back to field-level case workers and supervisors regarding client outcomes. How does, for example, noncustodial parent financial support further enable a client to become self-sufficient? Informal meetings between IV-A and IV-D caseworkers or special reports distributed to staff that feed back the results of data collection and sharing on client outcomes have the potential to strengthen the bond between IV-A and IV-D efforts. Topics of information include cases closed, collections, unknown fathers, good cause, and sanctioned cases.
- The Pennsylvania representative discussed how targeted training helps districts improve performance.
- Participants discussed the value of some high-level training materials developed at the Federal level for use by States. States can adapt these materials to their particular training needs.
- Participants felt that supervisors should be required to attend field-level worker training; supervisors need to understand and vocally support collaboration.
- Participants felt that new hire training should include both IV-A and IV-D staff.
- Dail Moore of OCSE/DSTLA provided information about a training initiative called **Better Outcomes Through Collaboration: An Interactive Seminar for Managers of Child Support, TANF, and Workforce Investment**. OCSE will provide seven State sessions and one training-of-trainers session from the seminar.

- **Follow-up**: Compact discs of the Facilitator and Participant Guides were made available on January 5, 2006, through Information Memorandum 06-01.

Recommendation: States should develop and implement "Big Picture" training/awareness programs. Training should include discussion on common outcomes (i.e., self-sufficiency) and how TANF, CSE, and other programs work together toward that goal.

Recommendation: Training should target two groups: new workers and "seasoned" caseworkers/supervisors. The information that trainees receive during training should be consistent with the message they hear from their more experienced peers and supervisors.

Recommendation: States should consider adopting outcome-focused training and or outcome-feedback mechanisms (e.g., via meetings, special reports, etc.) that gives workers of both programs an opportunity to better understand the value that the information they collect and share with another has in regards to client outcomes.

Recommendation: Federal, in addition to State and local, initiative regarding collaboration and cooperation is required. ACF should continue to support collaboration through training development and other initiatives (e.g., the Urban Academy, ACF Systems Summit, Collaboration training seminar, etc.) that build on both TANF and CSE experiences and opinions.

Discussion Topic: Do system controls have the potential to improve the data collection process?

- Minimal IV-D data collection by TANF staff is a top concern, so the use of technical solutions to improve data collection was discussed.
- A couple States are implementing system enhancements that block progression of the TANF eligibility lifecycle unless a minimum of IV-D data is entered into the system. The enhancements were a collaborative effort between IV-A and IV-D program staff.
- Some participants expressed concern that these enhancements would deny benefit issuance.
- Other States have implemented system edits that require data entry and do not allow the system user to move off the screen until data is entered.

Follow-up: The workgroup determined that this topic needs further examination; no recommendations were formulated.

Discussion Topic: What are characteristics of a Best Practice? The group identified components that are characteristic of a Best Practice.

Responds to a problem
Innovative
Improves accuracy
Meets guidelines
Cost-effective
Benign
Accountability
Achievable
Improves services
Improves performance
Transferable
Simple
Measurable
Practical
Positive net effect
Improves collaboration
Appealing to users/marketable

Follow-up: The workgroup determined that the list is valuable for future Best Practice identification activities, but can be refined. Two or three characteristics can potentially be combined together into a single characteristic. The list would be optimal if total characteristics numbered between 5 to 7.

Discussion Topic: What recommendations should be made concerning the TANF clearance process?

- Inaccurate clearance processing potentially leads to duplicate case creation, and requires resources to correct.
- There is potential long-term benefit to both programs if person-resolution functionality can be improved.

States like Nevada and Nebraska are currently working on enhancements to clearance functionality. The enhancements will make it harder for workers to create a pseudo-person in the system than go through with the resolution process. Nevada will be able to measure the effect of its enhancement once it is implemented.

Follow-up: The workgroup felt that this topic provides an excellent collaborative opportunity at both the Federal and State levels. Research the technical solutions implemented or in the process of being implemented by States. Investigate solutions that have measurably improved person-resolution performance. Provide design details (for example, rules and logic, reports, etc.) to States or develop a person-resolution enhancement toolkit.