



House Bill 3575
Legislative Oversight Committee
Eligibility System Update

November 17, 2008

At the last Legislative Oversight Committee hearing in July, HHSC reported that several initiatives were underway to help address timeliness. These included:

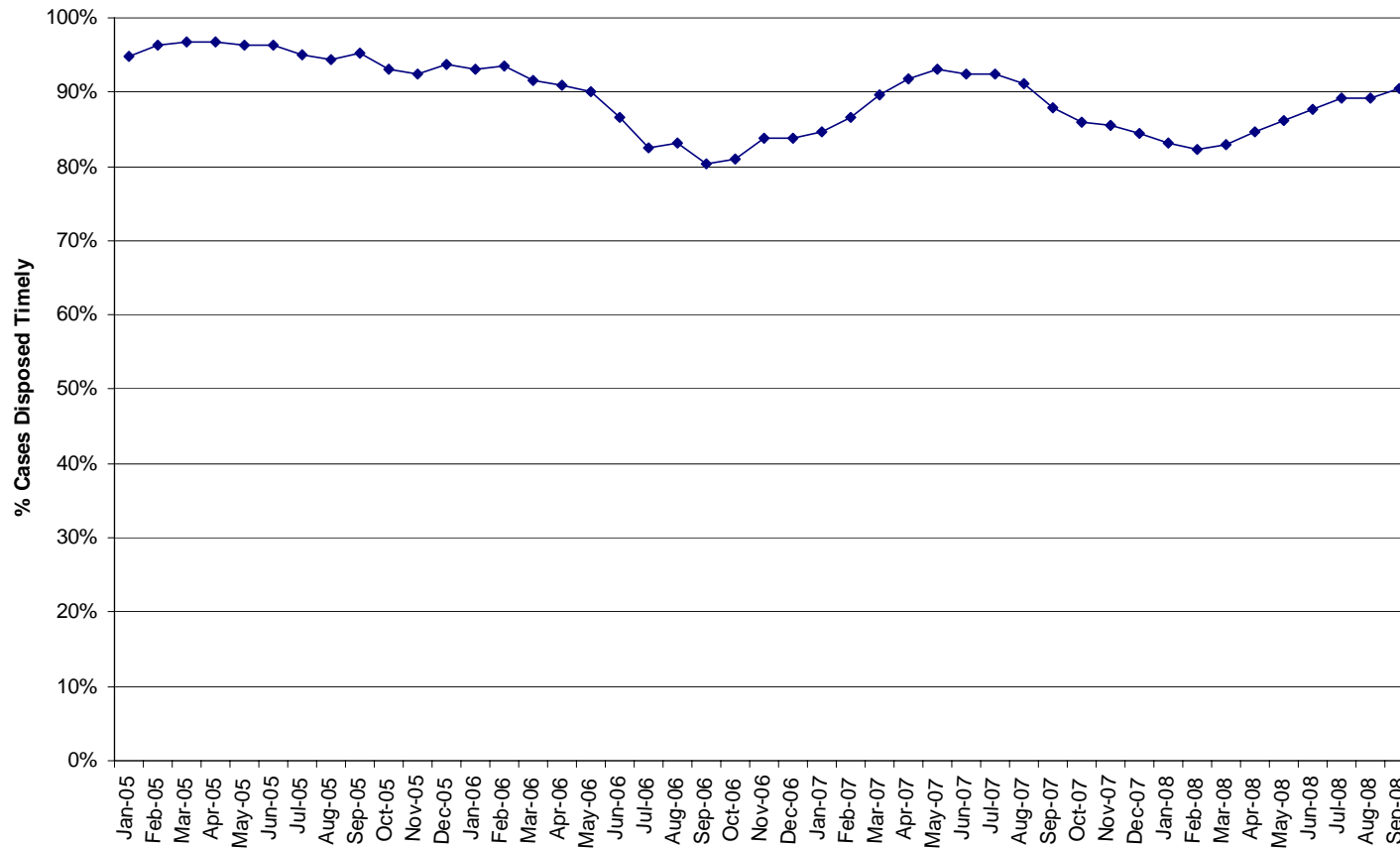
- Accelerated Training Schedules – Policy Changes
 - Staffing Stabilization – TIERS Enhancements
- As a result of these efforts, timeliness has improved and the gap between the two systems has decreased, as reflected below:

September 2008	SAVERR	TIERS	Statewide
Applications	92.7%	78.5%	90.4%
Recertifications	96.3%	86.0%	95.3%

- In September, 83.9 percent of food stamp applications (94,656) were processed in the SAVERR system.

Statewide Food Stamp Application Timeliness

Statewide Percentage of Food Stamp Applications Completed within Established Timeframes

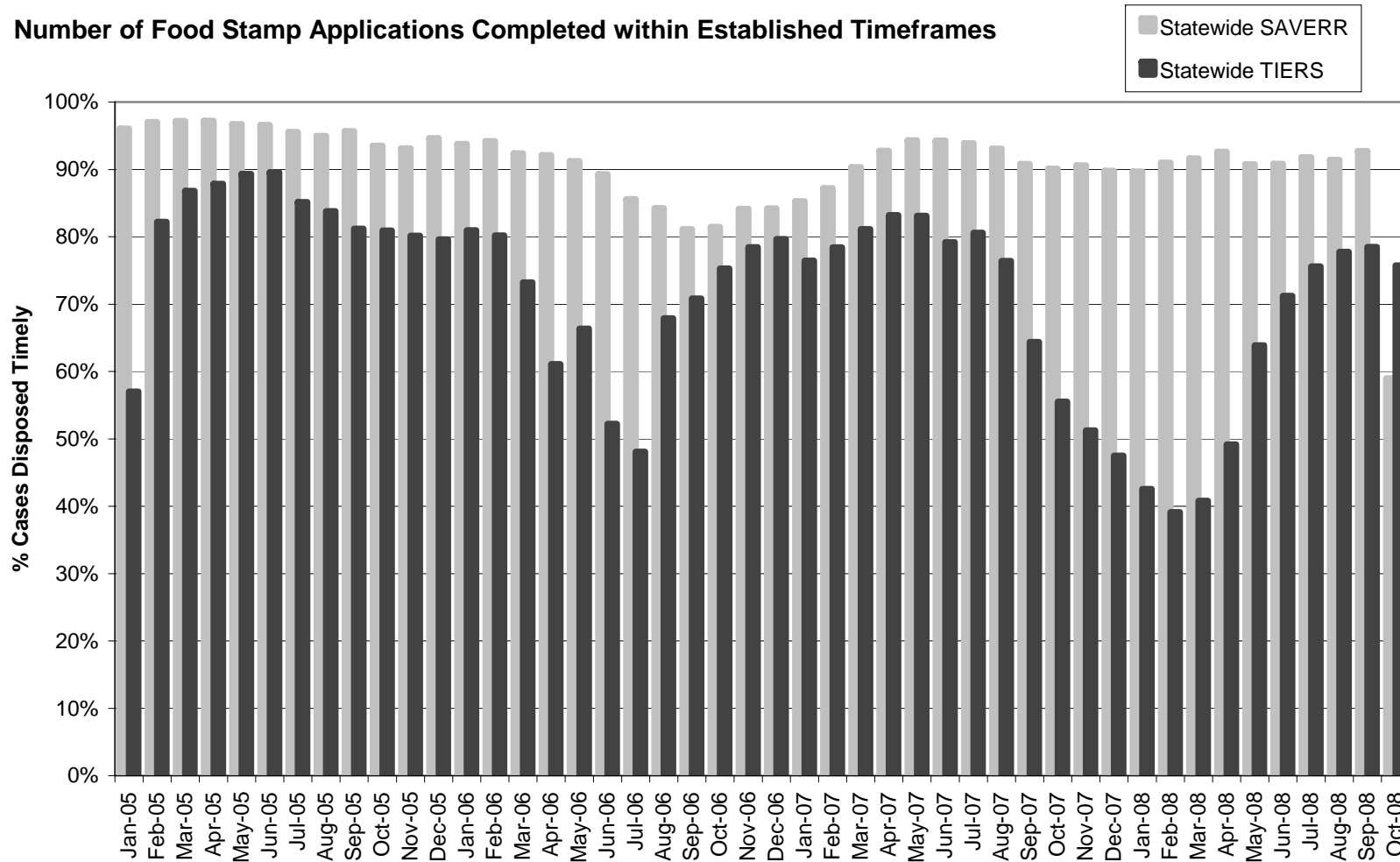


- Training additional staff has resulted in improved timeliness for food stamp cases processed in TIERS.
- The improvement trend that began in March continued through September, when timeliness reached 78.5 percent.
- Timeliness in the pilot offices has also shown improvement:
 - Hays County: 94.2 percent of food stamp applications were disposed timely in September 2008, compared to 74.9 percent in January 2008.
 - Travis County: 86.2 percent of food stamp applications were disposed timely in September 2008, compared to 62.3 percent in January 2008.
 - Williamson County: 84.9 percent of food stamp applications were disposed timely in September 2008, compared to 66.1 percent in January 2008.

TIERS Statewide	September 2007	February 2008	September 2008
Applications	64.4%	39.1%	78.5%
Recertifications	82.3%	72.6%	86.0%

Statewide Food Stamp Application Timeliness

Number of Food Stamp Applications Completed within Established Timeframes



Hurricane Ike has and will continue to affect timeliness.

- Gulf Coast residents applied for disaster-related food stamp benefits in record numbers.
- Overall applications for food stamps increased by 194.8 percent (or 219,736) between September and October.
- Over 142,000 households and more than 372,000 individuals from the 29 disaster counties were certified for benefits.
- Prior to Hurricane Ike, timeliness for food stamp applications processed for September benefits was 90.4 percent, compared to 82.4 percent in February 2008.
- The spike in applications resulted in a decline in timeliness in October.
- The state accepted Hurricane Ike applications through October 15, 2008, but timeliness was calculated based on the date the emergency benefits began, which was September 16, 2008. This inflated the number of applications appearing untimely.

Month	# of Applications	% Timely
March 2008	143,791	82.9%
April 2008	116,701	84.6%
May 2008	123,162	86.2%
June 2008	154,179	87.8%
July 2008	114,890	89.3%
August 2008	112,520	89.3%
September 2008	112,779	90.4%
October 2008	332,515	60.8%

**Food Stamp Application Timeliness by Region for September and October 2008
(Beaumont and Houston Regions Excluded)**

	September		October		Percent Increase
	Disposed	Percent Timely	Disposed	Percent Timely	
Lubbock	4,224	94.0%	6,337	91.6%	50.0%
Abilene/Midland	4,879	92.9%	7,575	87.4%	55.3%
Dallas/Fort Worth	24,505	91.0%	49,476	79.7%	101.9%
Tyler	5,057	91.7%	11,233	85.1%	122.1%
Austin	11,975	89.8%	25,828	77.6%	115.7%
San Antonio	12,520	90.4%	22,818	83.4%	82.3%
El Paso	4,759	90.3%	8,367	84.4%	75.8%
Rio Grande Valley	14,813	88.4%	19,610	84.3%	32.4%
Other	4,393	80.5%	11,775	79.5%	168.0%
Total	87,125	90.4%	163,019	81.8%	87.1%

Beaumont and Houston Regions Only

	September		October		Percent Increase
	Disposed	Percent Timely	Disposed	Percent Timely	
Beaumont	4,465	89.5%	35,539	40.6%	695.9%
Houston	21,189	92.3%	133,957	40.7%	532.2%
Total	25,654	91.8%	169,496	40.6%	560.7%

Hurricane Ike Response

- In response to the increase in the number of individuals applying for assistance, resources were shifted to improve and facilitate access. These efforts included:
 - Expanded business hours for affected eligibility offices and the call centers.
 - Implemented a simplified application (via a waiver) for disaster-related food stamps that required less documentation and verification.
- Between September and October, 133 health and human services facilities were closed at some point due to damage or power loss caused by Hurricane Ike.
 - As of November 6, 2008, four eligibility offices remained closed : 1 in Galveston and 3 in Houston (I-10 East, 1425 East 40th, and Buffalo Speedway).
- 2-1-1 handled a total of 249,081 calls between September 9 - 25, with 24,595 calls handled in one day.
 - Typically the system handles an average of 150,000 in a regular month
- Call center contractor assisted the response effort by accepting SAVERR applications over the phone and handling calls from clients from the affected area.
 - In the five weeks following Hurricane Ike, more than 280,000 calls were handled, which represents a significant increase over normal call volumes.
- Application rates and call volume should stabilize over the next several weeks.

HHSC continues to focus efforts on training more staff throughout the state in TIERS to help improve timeliness.

- Of the 4,709 eligibility staff currently performing eligibility determinations, 47.8 percent (or 2,253) have received TIERS training. Training occurred between January 1, 2006 and October 30, 2008.
 - A net increase of 309 TIERS trained staff since June 30, 2008.
 - Compares to 40.6 percent TIERS trained staff in June.
- In Region 7 (Central Texas), the percentage of TIERS trained staff has increased to 91.8 percent in October, compared to 69.8 percent in June.

- In September 2008, there was a total of 6,828 eligibility determination staff.
 - Eligibility staffing grew from 6,343 in September 2007 to a peak of 7,126 in May 2008.
 - In October 2008, there were 6,969 eligibility determination staff.

- Staff stabilization has been facilitated by an enhanced compensation plan for eligibility staff that went into effect June 1, 2008.
 - Eligibility Determination Staff
 - Entry-level employees were hired and Worker Is with less than one year tenure were promoted to Worker IIs.
 - This increased the minimum annual starting salary from \$26,180 up to \$27,601 (FY 2009 levels).
 - Worker Is with one year or more tenure and existing Worker IIs were promoted to Worker IIIs.
 - Worker IIIs with acceptable performance received a five percent merit raise.
 - Worker IVs, Supervisors, and Program Managers with acceptable performance received a five percent merit raise.

Turnover by Job Category

Turnover for FY 2008 indicates stabilization; however, overall turnover for eligibility workers held at 22.2% from FY 2007.

Job Title	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008
Clerks	38.3%	23.5%	21.3%
Eligibility Workers	28.8%	22.2%	22.2%
Supervisors	23.5%	8.2%	6.1%
All Eligibility Staff	31.3%	22.3%	21.0%

- Turnover continues to be an issue.
 - Turnover rates reduced slightly between fiscal years 2007 and 2008.
 - Turnover rate for fiscal year 2008 is at 21 percent compared to 22.3 percent in fiscal year 2007.
 - During fiscal year 2008, turnover of eligibility workers decreased from 26.2 percent in the first quarter to 21.5 percent in the fourth quarter.



Eligibility Staffing Request

HHSC's FY 2010-2011 Legislative Appropriations Request includes two exceptional requests that would increase eligibility determination staffing levels.

Eligibility Staffing Requests	FY 2010	FY 2011
Base Request	7,438	7,438
Exceptional Item Requests		
Maintain FY 2009 Staffing Level	451	451
Subtotal	7,889	7,889
Support Caseload Growth	381	544
Total Request	8,270	8,433

TIERS Enhancements

- Enhancements to TIERS have been implemented based on feedback from eligibility staff.
- A November 2007 usability study identified 34 enhancements, which will be implemented over several future releases of the TIERS application.
 - In June 2008, a redesign of the relationship screens in TIERS was implemented to streamline and improve the process of adding and editing relationship information for cases in TIERS.
 - Some of the enhancements planned for release in fall 2008 include:
 - Streamlining the data entry process for recertifications to give users the ability to go directly to the data entry areas that need updating.
 - Improvements to the design and layout of frequently used screens and navigation buttons.
 - Displaying data in reverse chronological order on some of the pages used most often. This change will allow the user to view the most recent information without having to scroll to the bottom of the page.
- Continuing to work with eligibility determination staff in the field offices to gather input for additional usability improvements.

TIERS Geographic Roll-out

Authorization was received from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to geographically roll-out TIERS to up to 22% of the food stamp caseload.

- In October 2008, nine Central Texas (Region 7) offices with approximately 8,500 Medicaid, TANF, and food stamp cases were converted to TIERS.

Bastrop	Hamilton	Llano
Elgin	LaGrange	Marble Falls
Goldthwaite	Lampasas	San Saba

- Readiness reviews occurred in September.
- Technical and office-level conversion benchmarks were met.
- Call center performance benchmarks were not met as a direct result of Hurricane Ike.
 - Call volume is expected to stabilize by the time the first renewal notices are received by affected clients.
- On-site support staff and TIERS mentors were assigned to each office.
- Staff were well trained in TIERS and had few issues, and reported a smooth transition.
- Timeliness of food stamp applications will be monitored at each office.

November TIERS Conversion

- Conversion of four additional offices approved for November 2008. Offices include:
 - Copperas Cove
 - Gatesville
 - Killeen
 - Temple
- Approximately 22,000 Medicaid, food stamp, and TANF SAVERR cases in this conversion.
- Readiness reviews were conducted in October.
- Technical and office-level conversion benchmarks were met.
- Call center performance benchmarks were not met as a direct result of Hurricane Ike; however, levels have begun to stabilize.
- Same post-conversion monitoring will occur as with the October conversion.

November Roll-out Benchmark Dashboard

Call Center Performance	
Abandonment Rate	Speed to Answer
* A	* A

M Met Benchmark Measure
A Addressing Issues

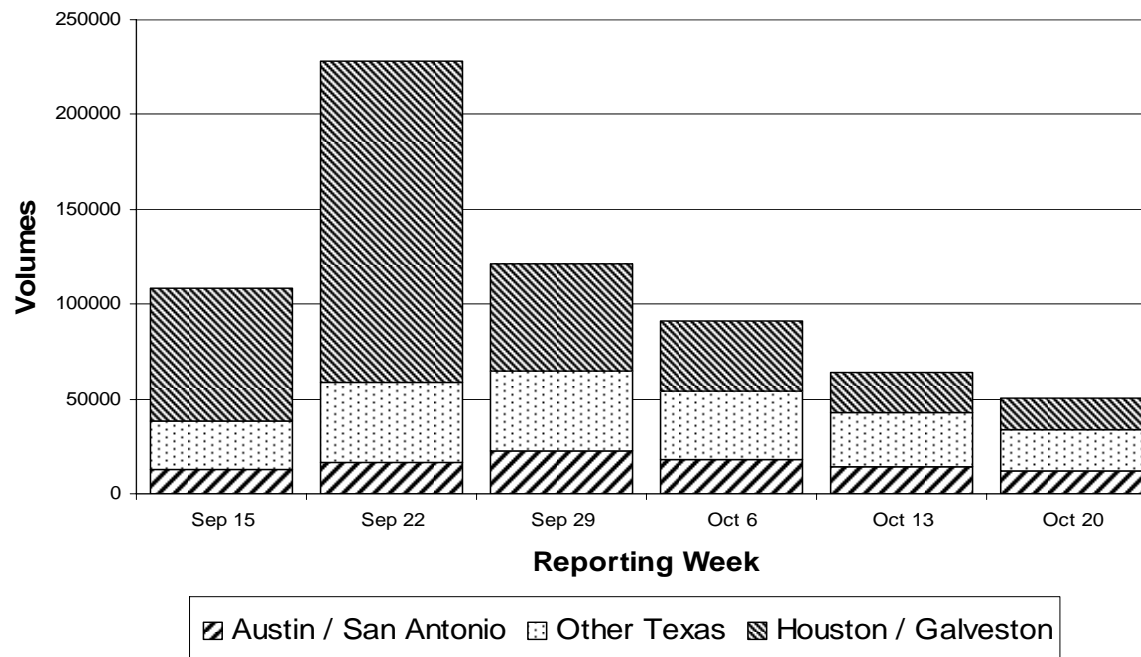
* The impact of Hurricane Ike affected call center performance beginning September 15, 2008.

Conversion Corrections and TIERS System Performance				
Staff Available to Address Mismatches	Server Utilization	Transaction Response Times	System Uptime	Network Utilization
M	M	M	M	M

Office Readiness			
Office	Trained Staff Available	On-site Support	TIERS Mentors
Copperas Cove	M	M	M
Gatesville	M	M	M
Killeen	M	M	M
Temple	M	M	M

Call Center Impact

- Hurricane Ike affected call center performance beginning September 15, 2008.
- Applications for Emergency Food Stamps were accepted by the call centers through October 15.
- Affected individuals continued to call via 2-1-1 through the week of October 20 to seek assistance and check the status of their applications, as the following chart indicates.





Geographic Roll-out Schedule

Austin Region Conversions

January 2009 – Approximately 22,000 SAVERR Cases

Bryan	Centerville	Madisonville
Navasota	Giddings	Hearne
Caldwell	Brenham	Rockdale
Marlin	Cameron	

February 2009 – Approximately 29,000 SAVERR Cases

Waco	Hillsboro	Meridian
Mexia	Teague	Luling
Lockhart		

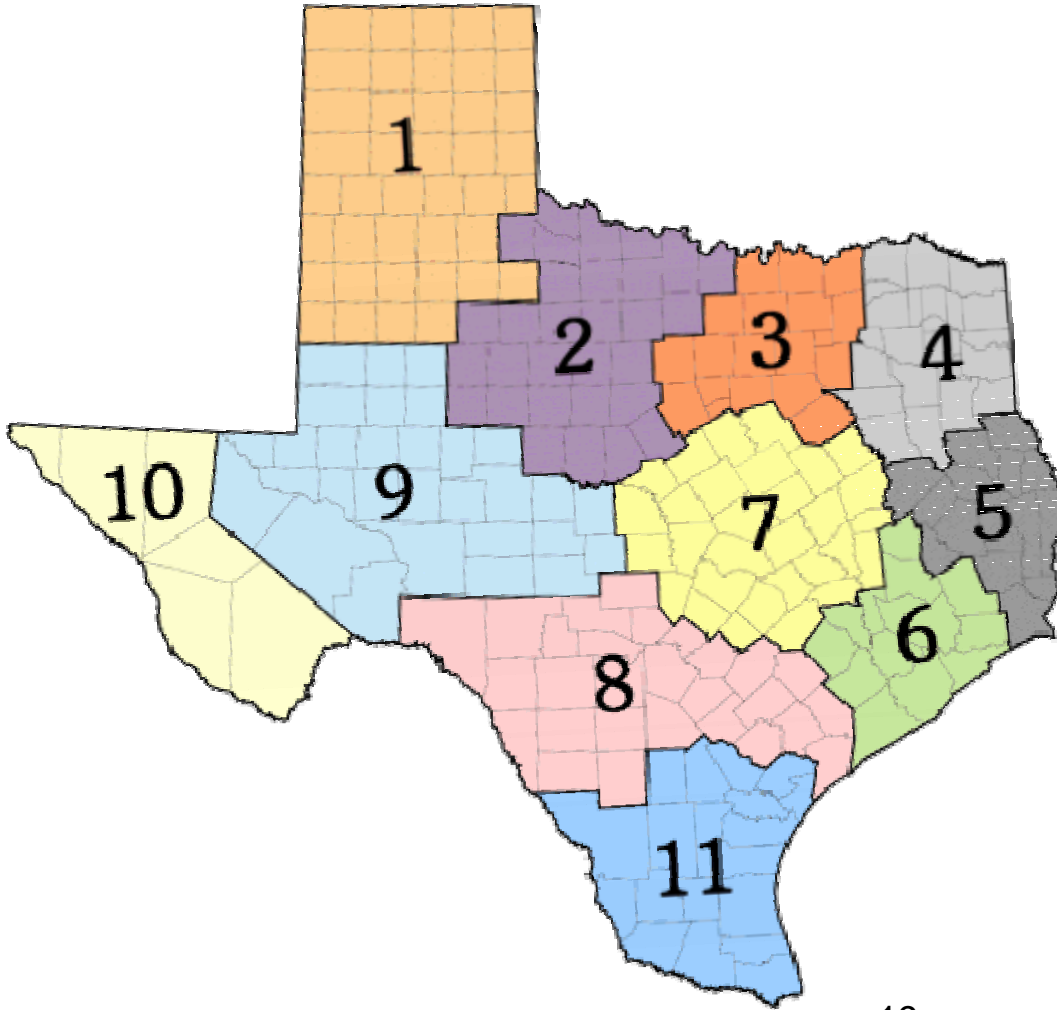
El Paso Region Conversions – April, May, and June 2009

– Approximately 109,000 SAVERR Cases in 13 offices

Lubbock Region Conversions – July and August 2009

– Approximately 64,000 SAVERR Cases in 21 offices

HHSC Regions



- Region 1 – Lubbock
- Region 2 – Abilene
- Region 3 – Dallas/Fort Worth
- Region 4 – Tyler
- Region 5 – Beaumont
- Region 6 – Houston
- Region 7 – Austin
- Region 8 – San Antonio
- Region 9 – Midland
- Region 10 – El Paso
- Region 11 – Rio Grande Valley

TIERS Program Expansions

- Revised conversion plan for the Medicaid for the Elderly and People with Disabilities (MEPD).
 - Beginning in January 2009, cases in the Central Texas (Region 7), El Paso (Region 10), and Lubbock (Region 1) regions will be converted.
 - Timeline is contingent on the successful implementation and testing of automation changes.
- Of the approximately 950,000 MEPD cases, more than 640,000 derive their Medicaid eligibility through Supplemental Security Income (SSI) eligibility.
 - The Social Security Administration (SSA) determines the financial eligibility and notifies HHSC through an automated interface.
 - Cases do not require HHSC eligibility worker intervention to certify eligibility.
 - Case maintenance is performed by HHSC eligibility workers; represents less workload.
- Of the MEPD cases with food stamps, approximately 78 percent are SSI.
 - These cases are processed by the Central Benefit Services (CBS) unit, rather than by field office staff.

Proposed MEPD Roll-out Schedule

- MEPD cases in the Central Texas (Region 7), El Paso (Region 10), and Lubbock (Region 1) regions will be converted in FY 2009.
- Associated food stamp cases are converted in concert with the Texas Works roll-out schedule.
 - The addition of MEPD cases to the conversion schedule does not expand the number of food stamp cases to be converted.

Proposed Schedule	Estimated Number of Cases	MEPD Case Type
January 2009 (Region 7)	12,198	Non-SSI Cases
February 2009 (Region 7)	10,000 41,262	Non-SSI Cases SSI Cases
April 2009 (Region 10)	15,572	Non-SSI Cases
June 2009 (Region 10)	27,758	SSI Cases
July 2009 (Region 1)	6,372	Non-SSI Cases
August 2009 (Region 1)	7,000 15,881	Non-SSI Cases SSI Cases

The current plan is to convert the remaining MEPD cases in three additional conversions in FY 2010.



MEPD Benchmarks

In addition to the technical and call center performance benchmarks established for the Texas Works conversions, HHSC will also apply benchmarks to the MEPD conversions.

Benchmark to Determine Readiness for Conversion

Measure

Adequacy of MEPD staff trained in TIERS and available to process cases

500 MEPD cases per TIERS-trained worker

Post Conversion Benchmarks

Measure

MEPD Applications: Monitor post-conversion performance for any impact to MEPD client services.

Food Stamp Applications processed by the Central Benefit Services unit: Monitor post-conversion performance for any impact to client services.

If timeliness drops more than three percentage points below the office's average timeliness in the three months prior to conversion, HHSC will have a root cause analysis performed by the Independent Validation and Verification (IV&V) vendor to identify the factors contributing to the decline. HHSC will evaluate timeliness at 30, 60, and 90 days post-conversion. If TIERS performance or changes to the business processes associated with rolling out TIERS are identified by the IV&V vendor as a primary causal factor, then a remediation plan will be developed and any impact to future roll-out schedule will be assessed.

MEPD Conversion Support

- MEPD staff will be supported by the on-site support and TIERS mentors that are temporarily assigned to each office after conversion.
- A centralized command center will be established to assist MEPD staff and providers. The command center will:
 - Provide experienced policy assistance to MEPD staff during the transition.
 - Help distinguish between complex policy and system navigation requirements.
- Command center function will be in place for a minimum of two weeks after each MEPD conversion.

TIERS Hardware Capacity

Additional hardware is needed to support caseload growth and the expansion of TIERS beyond the fiscal year 2009 conversion plan.

- Current locations that house the TIERS servers are not adequate to support the expansion.

HHSC is working with DIR to relocate and support the two environments needed for TIERS.

- Expanded production environment will be located at the Austin Data Center.
- Development and testing environment will be located at the Winters Data Center.
- HHSC finalizing negotiations with DIR for the build-out and ongoing charges.

Moving forward with the expansion and relocation plans requires federal approval.

- An Implementation Advance Planning Document Update (IAPDU) will be submitted to request approval from FNS and CMS.
- Locations will be prepared within approximately six months.

HHSC is procuring three contracts related to eligibility services.

- **Document Processing Services and Eligibility Support Services**

- HHSC received federal approval of the Requests for Proposals (RFP) on June 30, 2008.
- Proposals were due:
 - September 30, 2008, for Document Processing Services.
 - October 14, 2008, for Eligibility Support Services.
- Tentative award announcements are anticipated January 2009.

- **TIERS Maintenance**

- Draft RFP was released on August 14, with comments due September 18, 2008.
- Updated draft will be posted in December, and the final RFP will be released in April 2009.
- Tentative contract award will be announced by late November 2009.