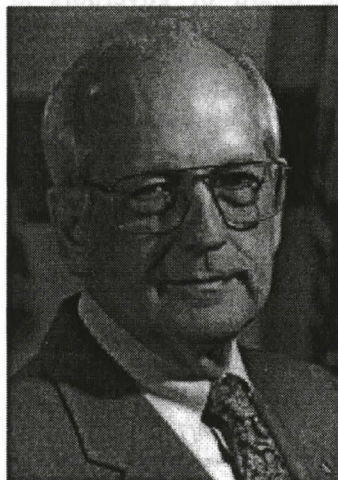


That's Good for Oklahoma!®

DHS MOVES INTO THE 21ST CENTURY



George Miller, Director, DHS

■(GIT) One of the most talked-about agencies in state government, the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, stands as a national leader in pioneering programs that revolutionize providing services that meet the agency's original constitutional mission:

"The relief and care of needy aged persons who are unable to provide for themselves, and other needy persons who, on account of immature age, physical infirmity, disability, or other causes, are unable to provide or care for themselves ..."

A depression-era social worker made a home visit and found two little boys fighting over a biscuit, the last piece of food in their house. In the early days federal officials questioned Oklahoma's compliance with residence requirements. The Custer County director led them to a bridge where homeless families had sought shelter from the freezing weather. Once, dependent, neglected, and delinquent children were housed in segregated state institutions, where care was custodial and sometimes brutal.

Hunger and homelessness may still exist in Oklahoma, but they are no longer the unexceptional fact of life they once were. Children are no longer warehoused in state institutions. The poorest families have access to medical care. Parents who cannot earn enough to support their children have a chance at education and training that was unheard of two generations ago.

COMBINING CYBERSPACE AND SERVICES ... DHS REACHES OKLAHOMANS

Oklahoma was the first state in the nation to require mothers with children under the age of 6 to register for job training under a waiver of federal AFDC regulations, and it was among the first to implement the JOBS program under the Family Support Act of 1988.

Today, as government in general faces shrinking budgets and growing service demands, Oklahoma's Department of Human Services is responding to these challenges by incorporating cyberspace technology to streamline procedures, improve efficiency, and better serve its growing caseload. Two of these efforts, the Model County Project and the KIDS Project, are particularly important as Oklahoma prepares itself for the twenty-first century.

THE MODEL COUNTY PROJECT

Payne County is the testing grounds for the DHS Model County Project. The "Model County" project allows workers to have immediate on-line access to policies, forms to streamline paperwork in the agency's public assistance programs, and case data tracking — a critical need for Oklahoma's highly mobile client population. Networked computers on every worker's desk and in interview rooms

reduce the necessity for paper forms while ensuring that client case information is available statewide. Workers dealing directly with clients can spend less time on procedural requirements and more time determining clients' needs.

The Model County project, instituted in fiscal year 1995, is a partnership agreement among the DHS Office of Field Operations, the divisions of Data Services, Management Services, Family Support Services and Children and Family Services. The project, through a network mainframe, will ultimately automate ALL case documentation functions. Payne County Director, Harl Hentges outlined the project's two phases.

"The first phase is to get a computer on everyone's desk. The second, is to transfer all agency forms to the system."

The implementation of the first two phases is almost complete. Hardware, office automation, and shell documents have been installed in all county DHS offices.

The University of Oklahoma and the Center for Professional Development's SATTRN project have been contracted to provide worker training on the new systems. Special classes are provided to familiarize field workers with the requirements and the capabilities of the system. Already, more than 500 DHS field staff have completed training.

"The Model County Project is a technology breakthrough that will enable the Department of Human Services to better serve those Oklahomans who need assistance and to better fulfill its responsibility to the taxpayers of this state," George A. Miller, DHS Director, said. "When this system is fully operational in the next year, workers will have at their fingertips the most current information about each individual in their caseload. With immediate access to this type of timely, comprehensive information, case workers can respond more quickly to the questions and the needs of the people

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