

we serve."

"DHS desperately needed a system to track recipients and its growing caseload," Hentges said.

"Two years ago, our caseloads were increasing at a rate of 60 percent with 300 cases per worker," Tom Elliott, statewide project coordinator, explained. "Because of the FTE (full time equivalent) cap, we knew we would not be able to hire additional staff.

"In phase II, we will take 100 forms, which are now handwritten, and transfer them into the system. This will allow us to combine data information, like social security numbers."

Elliott explained that the agency is hoping to implement a phase III, that will go beyond the installation of computers and forms. In phase III, the concept of artificial intelligence will be considered.

Artificial intelligence programs consist of a rules-based system, a move that will virtually eliminate the "guess-work" for caseworkers. In other words, the rules-based system would combine DHS's 25 policy manuals under a "help" menu on their computer screens.

In addition, Elliott explained that DHS will look into establishing kiosks and adding voice response systems, allowing the agency to become "paperless." Eliminating paper, will create additional office space and reduce operational costs.

Elliott estimated that soon, there will be a need for all states to be able to communicate with one another through electronic systems, allowing for the sharing of information. However, he said it is ideal to maintain a centralized system. By centralizing the system, the agency protects confidentiality.

Elliott added that the system will help in preparing ad hoc reports and tracking lists. "But," he said, "all of this is subject to adequate funding."

"With immediate access to accurate information, DHS workers can more quickly detect any errors — and any deceptions — which might provide payments or services to persons who are not eligible under state and federal regulations," Miller said. "This technology will provide social workers with more time to do those things which brought them into their chosen careers — that is, use their skills and training in helping people one-on-one."

"A second program that is interrelated with the Model County Project and is also vital to adequately serving our clients is 'KIDS'," Hentges said. Thoughtful system design enabled DHS to implement the

companion systems and optimize not only related data components and hardware but equally important, the accessibility of information by case workers.

CHILD WELFARE WORKERS EXPEDITE THEIR EFFORTS BY WORKING WITH "KIDS"

KIDS is an automated case management system that provides statewide data tracking for children's services. Employing state-of-the-art technology the \$30 million project received 75 percent of its funding from federal sources.

KIDS automated information systems enable DHS caseworkers to focus on client needs rather than paperwork. "With immediate access to accurate information, workers can more quickly detect any errors, discrepancies, or deceptions," said Miller.

Dicy Perry, coordinator for the KIDS project, explained Deloitte and Touche, LLP, contracted with Oklahoma over the last two years to develop the system. "This system enables the staff to better manage and track activities in cases involving custody, and suspected neglect or abuse of children," she said.

Now in phase II, the project is on-line with more than 1,100 personal computer stations linked through local and area-wide networks. Documents, files, reports and case records that once took days or weeks to distribute are now available to Child Welfare workers and supervisors in just minutes.

"Caseworkers throughout the field can look up any case history in the state," Perry continued, "Also, supervisors can make recommendations to their caseworkers by ac-

cessing files through the network."

Earlier this week, DHS was selected as a finalist in the "Computerworld Smithsonian Awards" for technology innovations. "We are excited about this honor on two fronts: First, because Deloitte and Touche entered our work into the competition; and secondly, because the board of governors at Computerworld Smithsonian thought this work, which is so vital to our mission, sets a benchmark for others to follow," Miller said.

The KIDS project was among 341 entry applications sent from 39 states and 18 foreign countries. The top 50 applicants have been invited to participate in the awards ceremonies June 3-4 in Washington D.C. The awards are divided into 10 categories with five finalists in each. Oklahoma's KIDS project is one of the top five finalists.

Capitol Network News congratulates the Oklahoma Department of Human Services — for its innovation, insight, and intuitiveness in meeting the challenges of serving Oklahoma's less fortunate today and through the next century. Operating in all seventy-seven counties, DHS responds to very specific needs of Oklahomans and delivers services right to its clients — one-on-one.

Earning international acclaim from the "Computerworld Smithsonian Awards" as one of five finalists; implementing on-line systems to streamline processes, supporting the efforts of caseworkers while improving responsiveness to client needs; and having the vision to combine technology and compassion to better serve Oklahoma's children. Thanks DHS!

THAT'S GOOD FOR OKLAHOMA!

DIRECTOR OF DHS GEORGE MILLER

GEORGE A. MILLER has had a long and distinguished career as a public servant for the citizens of Oklahoma. He served as interim director for two months before being named the Director of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services in March 1994 by the Oklahoma Commission for Human Services.

In 1994, he served as Cabinet Secretary for Health and Human Services, overseeing 14 agencies of Oklahoma government. Senator Miller, as he is fondly called by many who know him, has worked at DHS for 22 years.

He left the Oklahoma State Senate in 1974 to become Department Secretary to DHS Director Lloyd E. Rader. During

Sen. Miller's 10 years in the State Senate, he chaired the Higher Education Committee and served on standing committees, including Education, Public Health, Social Welfare, Agriculture, and Military and Veterans Affairs.

He was a member of the Oklahoma Educational Council and the Education Commission of the States, where he served as vice chair of the National Task Force of Graduate and Professional Education.

In another life, Sen. Miller had a 30-year career in broadcasting which started in 1943. During his career, he worked as an engineer, chief engineer, television anchor, and news director.