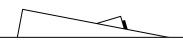
# Arizona Department of Economic Security Division of Developmental Disabilities (Report Highlights)

November 2000

The Division of Developmental Disabilities (Division) provides services to 18,000 persons with developmental disabilities and their families. Sixty percent of the clients (11,000) are eligible for services through the Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS) operated by Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), the State's Medicaid agency.

# **Our Conclusions:**

Division and Child Protective Services (CPS) caseworkers need to better coordinate their efforts regarding foster care children who become involved with both divisions. In addition, the Division needs to work with the Government Information Technology Agency to evaluate replacing its information system, manage its client waiting list better, and continue to improve the system for reporting client abuse and neglect. Finally, the Division has improved and should continue to improve its contracts management.



**Developmental Disability**—A severe chronic disability that is:

- Attributable to mental or physical impairment such as mental retardation or cerebal palsy;
- Manifested before age 18;
- Likely to continue indefinitely;
- Results in substantial functional limitations in three or more major life areas; and
- Reflects the need for extended or lifelong special services.

# Better Coordination Between Division and CPS Needed

The Division of Developmental Disabilities and Child Protective Services (CPS), both within the Department of Economic Security (DES), share responsibility for meeting the needs of CPS-involved children with developmental disabilities. At the end of June 2000, the Division and CPS shared case management of 524 (280 in Maricopa County) of these foster care children.

**Coordination important**—These cases require two kinds of expertise: one dealing with the legal system for abused and neglected children, and the other assessing needs and providing services. Coordination is especially important in these cases to ensure the children's special needs are met.

> CPS placed a child with developmental disabilities in foster care, but the Division was not involved in decisions about her services. While in foster care, she received an operation that can be problematic for children with her condition and it resulted in speech difficulties.

**More cross training needed**—DES does not provide sufficient cross training to help Division and CPS workers understand each other's roles and effectively serve their mutual clients. In addition, poorly defined and outdated policies for determining when a CPS case should be transferred to the Division also creates disagreements.

# **DES** should:

- ✓ Continue efforts to develop a transfer policy that will ensure CPS-involved children with developmental disabilities receive appropriate and timely services;
- Provide training on the transfer policy; and
- Provide cross training for Division and CPS caseworkers.

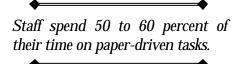
Inadequate Information Systems Hamper Efforts

The Division's current information systems keep it from effectively serving its 18,000 clients and managing its \$372 million business.

The main system, called ASSISTS:

- Lacks key client information on:
  - client progress;
  - changing service needs; and
  - ➡ incidents of client abuse.
- Cannot provide timely reports that are needed to authorize services;
- Cannot provide information on how many clients are waiting for services, or for how long; and

Does not integrate key business functions, such as provider license information, service authorizations, contracts, and bill payments.



Even the limited information that is available from ASSISTS is difficult to access. Four to five staff members must often share one computer.

**New system needed**—A 1995 consultant's report concluded that the Division needs a new information system. Such a system would probably cost \$25 million. Unfortunately, federal funds are not available to help pay the cost.

# The Division should:

- ✓ Work with the Government Information Technology Agency (GITA) to establish the needs, costs, and funding options for a new information system; and
- Request in its next budget, more computers for its staff.

# Client Waiting List Not Adequately Maintained

When services a client needs are not available—either due to lack of funding or a lack of providers—the Division should enter the information onto a waiting list. Having a list is key for the Division and policymakers to be able to manage how to meet the unmet needs. Currently, the waiting list is:

- Incomplete Division management estimates it is only 75 percent complete; and
- Inaccurate information is inaccurate on how long clients have been waiting.

Waiting list problems exist because:

- Staff do not always enter clients on the waiting list;
- Clients may give up waiting and ask to be removed from the list; and
- Policies and procedures governing the list are inadequate.

## The Division should:

- ✓ Instruct its staff to promptly enter all authorized but unmet service needs on the list; and
  - Update policies and procedures for maintaining the list.

#### Further Improvement Managing Unusual Incident Reports Needed

When client abuse or neglect is observed, suspected, or alleged, Division management must be notified through an Unusual Incident Report (UIR). In fiscal year 1999, 3,300 UIRs were filed.

**Management problems remain**—Although the Division has improved the UIR system since our last report in 1993, some problems remain:

There are too many (91) codes for categorizing incidents, lending to inconsistent coding;

- All files still do not show when investigations are complete;
- There is a two to three year backlog of forms waiting to be entered on the UIR database; and
- Staffing is inadequate to handle current UIR and backlog.

**Pilot program shows promise**—The Division recently adopted a pilot UIR program to streamline the process. It decreases incident codes from 91 categories to 11 and gathers time sensitive data to measure performance. However, the Division still needs to manage the backlog and ensure that staff is properly trained in the new program.

# The Division should:

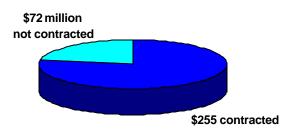
 Continue to monitor the implementation of the pilot program.

# Contract Management Practices Have Improved

Seventy-eight percent of the Division's fiscal year 1999 budget was expended on contracts. These contracts include:

- 961 contracts with service providers such as group homes and therapists; and
- 1,566 individual service agreements (ISA's) with individuals providing services such as attendant care and transportation.

#### **Amounts Contracted**



**Previous contracting problems corrected**—Two previous audits identified numerous contracting problems. This audit found the Division has largely corrected its previous contracting problems. However, the Division can still improve its processes. For example, a poorly drafted Request For Proposal (RFP) led to a contract challenge in 1998.

# The Division should:

✓ Continue with its plans to hire a consultant to review its contracting processes and provide training to Division staff.

# Other Pertinent Information

Auditors developed other information on future increases in service needs.

Many people with disabilities do not request or currently receive services. These include an increasing number of adults with developmental disabilities who live with parents. As these parents age, they will no longer be able to provide care and the demand for State services will likely increase.

The average age of developmental disability caregivers is 58.

There is also a proposal to change the State's definition of developmental disability to the federal definition. It is estimated this change could make another 10,600 persons eligible for services at a potential annual cost of \$95,200,000.

## **To Obtain More Information**

A copy of the full report can be obtained by calling (602) 553-0333 or by visiting our Web site at:

www.auditorgen.state.az.us

The contact person for this report is Shan Hays.