



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

ISMAEL AHMED
DIRECTOR

July 28, 2009

Ms. Jackie Doig
Center for Civil Justice
320 S. Washington Ave.
Saginaw, MI. 48607

Dear Ms. Doig:

I am in receipt of your letter to Director Ahmed regarding the rollout of Bridges into Wayne and Macomb Counties, and he has asked me to respond on his behalf. I truly appreciate your interest in helping achieve a successful Bridges roll-out and, most importantly, your continued support in serving the needs and interests of DHS clients and Michigan residents in need.

As you are aware, Bridges provides our staff and our clients with a single automated system that applies data about individuals and families to all programs that they are requesting. It has allowed us to move forward with exciting new self-service access for our clients to check their benefits online and by phone, apply for Food Assistance online, and report changes in their circumstances online. These new forms of access are reliant on having all cases in Bridges and will be made available shortly after the statewide rollout of Bridges is complete.

I understand the concerns that you have outlined in your letter, and assure you we are addressing these issues as we convert the final two counties to Bridges. I have personally spent many hours in our local offices hearing the concerns of our first line staff, watching them work in Bridges, and supporting them during this significant change in our way of doing business. We are committed to avoiding adverse impact on any individuals or families as a result of conversion of cases from our legacy systems to Bridges. The following changes are or will be in place prior to the Wayne and Macomb County rollout.

1. Pre-termination or pre-reduction reviews

The Bridges conversion process is designed to maintain the client's benefits as they were in the old DHS systems until any change is confirmed by our eligibility staff in the new system as being correct. Thus, if the new benefit is different than the old benefit, then a worker will review and resolve the difference. The client continues to receive the same benefit that they received in our legacy systems until the difference is resolved.

As to your concerns regarding clients receiving SSI related Medicaid benefits, we have requested an electronic file of all SSI recipients from the Social Security Administration that we will use to update our legacy cases. In addition, I have temporarily added extra staff to our central SSI processing unit to assure that any remaining manual data clean-up is completed in a timely manner.

This topic is prioritized as a critical project issue and is a key measure of the project's readiness to proceed with the Wayne and Macomb rollout. In addition to the data clean-up activities, we are also modifying Bridges software code to avoid any inadvertent worker approval of Medicaid closures as a result of the legacy SSI-related Medicaid data issues. These modifications in both our legacy data and Bridges systems are underway and will be completed before our Wayne and Macomb County conversions.

2. "Work arounds" and other Bridges features

DHS is currently experiencing an unprecedented increase in activity related to client interactions (i.e., applications, response to questions, etc.) most of which appears to correlate with Michigan's troublesome economic conditions. DHS is in the process of adding 200 eligibility specialists to help meet this unprecedented level of need. In addition, we have recently identified and trained over 400 staff to assist staff in our local offices in overcoming the learning curve associated with Bridges. These individuals provide immediate support to staff who are struggling with completing an activity in Bridges and thereby help reduce the overall productivity dip associated with system implementation.

Bridges is designed to capture more client data than our old systems so that the end-to-end processing time of applications and redeterminations is more consistent and integrated. Some of the advantages include caseworkers only having to enter case information one time for all requested programs; Bridges then creates budgets based on policy and performs eligibility determination across all requested programs and members automatically. Once reviewed and approved by the caseworker, notices and interface data to other departments and agencies are automatically sent. Additionally, Bridges also automatically creates redetermination appointments and review packets without worker intervention, which is another significant time saver.

It is common with new system implementations that there will be interim business processes in place to provide for a smoother transition until both the user training and system issues are resolved. At the beginning of the Bridges pilot in August 2008, there were approximately 140 such interim business processes. Since that time, we have been able to retire two-thirds of these interim processes and are on track to have three-fourths of these interim processes retired by the time of our Wayne and Macomb rollout in August. Many of remaining interim business processes relate to unusual scenarios that do not cause significant increases in processing time.

You have expressed particular concern about the impact of these interim processes in Wayne County due to your past experience with processing delays in that county. As part of preparing for the Bridges rollout, Wayne County (like other counties before it) has been charged with catching up with pending applications and overdue redeterminations prior to its conversion. The focus on this clean-up has had excellent results. Wayne County has been able to virtually eliminate overdue applications and redeterminations, and will be able to go into the Bridges conversion with this work current. In addition, Wayne and Macomb management have reinforced the expectation that voicemail must be cleared and answered.

3. Notice Problems

I appreciate your recognition of DHS' effort to consolidate the notices that clients receive which improves our communication with clients. Since the start of our rollout, we conducted several worker focus groups and shared correspondence examples with our clients in order to identify and make modifications. These efforts resulted in numerous improvements to client correspondence.

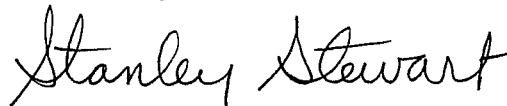
July 28, 2009

Page 3

Examples of changes made include refining the level of detail contained in notices, summarizing critical information at the beginning of the notice, improving format and "readability", changing the sequence of information to highlight critical information first, as well as continued efforts to clarify notice reasons and steps requiring action by the client. As we have rolled out, we have continued to make improvements and are continuing to invest resources to monitor this vital issue and make needed improvements. We have a number of additional improvements scheduled before our rollout to Wayne and Macomb and welcome the opportunity for any additional input for notice improvements.

The steps outlined above address the issues you raise in your July 10, 2009 letter and will be implemented before our rollout of Bridges to Wayne and Macomb Counties. Additionally, we are having weekly executive level status meetings to assure that these activities stay on track. Thank you for the opportunity to address your concerns. I truly appreciate your interest in serving our mutual clients and seeing a successful Bridges transition.

Sincerely,



Stanley M. Stewart
Chief Deputy Director

cc:

Ismael Ahmed, Director
Michigan Department of Human Services

Donald C. Mussen
Michigan Department of Human Services

Terry Salacina
Field Operations, Michigan Department of Human Services

Advomas
335 E. Big Beaver, Troy, MI 48083

The Arc Michigan
1325 S. Washington Ave., Lansing, MI 48910

Food Bank Council of Michigan
501 N. Walnut, Lansing, MI 48933

Lakeshore Legal Aid
21885 Dunham Rd., Clinton Twp., MI 48036

July 28, 2009

Page 4

Mental Health Association in Michigan
30233 Southfield Rd., Ste 220, Southfield, MI 48076

Michigan Association for Children with Emotional Disorders
30233 Southfield Rd. #219, Southfield, MI 48076

Michigan Disability Rights Coalition
3498 East Lake Lansing Road, Suite 100, East Lansing, MI 48823

Michigan Legal Services
900 Michigan Bldg., 220 Bagley Ave., Detroit, MI 48226

Michigan Poverty Law Program
611 Church St., Suite 4A, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-3000

National Employment Law Project
900 Victors Way, Suite 350, Ann Arbor, MI 48108

National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Michigan Chapter
21311 Civic Center Dr., Southfield, MI 48076

Oakland County Welfare Rights Organization
132 Franklin Blvd., Pontiac, MI 48341

PHI Michigan
1325 S. Washington, Lansing, MI 48917

UCP of Metropolitan Detroit
23077 Greenfield, Suite 205, Southfield, MI 48075

United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan
4970 Northwind Drive, Suite 102, East Lansing, MI 48823

United Community Housing Coalition
220 Bagley Ave., Suite 224, Detroit, MI 48226