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 | INFORMATIONAL LETTER |  
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TRANSMITTAL: 96 INF-13

TO: Commissioners of  
 Social Services

DIVISION: Services and  
 Community  
 Development

Date: March 22, 1996

SUBJECT: Protective Services for Adults (PSA): Adult Services  
 Automation Project Survey Results

SUGGESTED

DISTRIBUTION: Directors of Services  
 Adult Services Supervisors  
 PSA Staff

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ATTACHMENTS: A and B Automation Survey Forms  
 C,D,E and F Survey Results Charts  
 (All Attachments are available on-line)

FILING REFERENCES

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	Dept. Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
		457	Article 9-B SSL		95 LCM-45

In April 1995, the Department distributed a survey to the Protective Services for Adults (PSA) staff of all social services districts to obtain their input regarding the establishment of a statewide automated system for adult services (see 95 LCM-45). The survey was developed by an intra-agency workgroup, the Adult Services Automation Project (ASAP), which was established to provide recommendations to the Department regarding an automated system for PSA. A primary objective of the ASAP workgroup and the survey is to ensure that if an automated data system is developed for PSA, it meets the program planning, management and service delivery needs of both the the Office of Housing and Adult Services (OHAS) and the local social services districts. The workgroup is especially concerned that an automated system be "user-friendly" and enable local staff to use their time more effectively and efficiently in providing services to their clients. This release contains the results of the ASAP survey.

The specific purposes of the adult services automation survey were, as follows:

- to determine the degree of interest that local district PSA staff have regarding the establishment of an automated statewide system for the PSA program;
- to obtain information on current local district PSA automation initiatives and how these local initiatives could be incorporated into an automated statewide system; and
- to elicit ideas from local district PSA staff on how automation can best meet their needs and lead to increased productivity in doing their jobs.

The survey consisted of two instruments:

- A questionnaire for the PSA supervisor or program director in each district (Attachment A); and
- A brief instrument to be completed by all PSA staff in the district (Attachment B).

The supervisor's questionnaire requested information on the current status of PSA computerization efforts in the district, the district's PSA staffing level and organizational structure and the supervisor's opinion regarding the expected benefits and/or drawbacks of PSA automation.

The second survey form asked respondents to rate the expected job benefits if any of the eight possible components of an automated PSA system were implemented. Respondents also were encouraged to offer their own ideas and comments regarding PSA automation.

The overall response rate to the survey was exceptionally high despite a relatively short turnaround time. The PSA supervisor/program director questionnaires were returned by 57 of 58 districts, a response rate of 98.3%. A total of 524 individual surveys were returned. Based on an estimated total of 554 local district PSA staff, this represents a response rate of 94.6%.

An analysis of the responses to both survey instruments reveal that there is a strong consensus among local district PSA staff favoring the development of an automated statewide PSA system. Although there are some differences, strong support for an automated system exists across all job titles and among staff from larger, as well as smaller districts.

More than half of the PSA Supervisors/Program Directors indicated that their district currently uses some form of computerization to support their PSA program. The following are some of the reported ways that computers are currently used by PSA staff in local districts:

- programs to manage client financial management accounts;
- computerized PSA forms;
- client databases that generate caseload listings, tickler files, tracking of client outcomes, etc;
- word processing for letters and progress notes;
- computerized legal documents;
- computerized intake function; and
- maintenance of staff records.

More than two thirds of the PSA Supervisors/Program Directors who expressed an opinion, responded favorably to the question, "Will automation enhance service delivery to PSA clients?". Favorable responses outnumbered unfavorable responses among smaller, as well as larger districts.

Strong interest also was shown for local district participation in the actual development of a statewide automated system for PSA. More than two thirds of the PSA Supervisors/Program Directors indicated that they or someone else from their district would be interested in participating in such an effort.

In the survey instrument directed at all PSA staff, respondents were asked to rate the relative importance of eight potential components of an automated PSA system to their jobs. The following rating choices were offered for each potential component: "very important", "somewhat important", "no opinion", and "not important". For purposes of analysis, we chose to consider the first two choices to be favorable and the remaining

two choices to be unfavorable. The results were quite conclusive, with favorable response rates, ranging from 69.3% to 90.5%, for all eight potential system components. There were favorable majorities for each of the eight potential system components across all job titles and among districts of all sizes.

Presented below is a summary of the statewide favorable response rate to each of the eight potential system components on the individual survey.

- 82.6% The system should make forms available electronically.
- 82.8% The system should create and update case records electronically.
- 82.6% Menus should be developed as a guide for intake, assessment and case management.
- 80.3% A Document Generation capability should be built in.
- 85.1% A customized and automated directory of services and providers should be developed.
- 84.2% Standard report generation should be developed.
- 69.3% Customized and ad hoc reports should be available.
- 90.5% A tickler system should be developed and reports of upcoming due dates should be available.

The following are representative of the general comments that were offered by survey respondents.

- o Concerns were expressed for the confidentiality and security of client specific information that is stored electronically. Concerns were also expressed that too much technology has the tendency to take the "human" out of "human services".
- o Respondents strongly supported the concept of combining PSA automation with other Departmental systems, giving PSA staff the ability to generate applications for additional social services benefits and services (food stamps, Medicaid, personal care services, etc.) without further input processing.
- o A minority of respondents, particularly some from districts with smaller populations, indicated that they neither want nor need an automated PSA system. Respondents were concerned about the potential costs of an automated system in a fiscally strained environment.
- o One administrator expressed concern that an automated data system might be a precursor to a centralized registry system and mandated reporting for PSA and suggested that a locally developed system could furnish statistical data to support PSA planning and management needs.

- A number of respondents stressed that sufficient equipment and training must be available to all local district PSA staff in order for PSA automation to be successful.
- Respondents also stressed the importance of flexibility and emphasis on the needs of individual districts in the development of a system. Several of the same respondents suggested that the limitations and shortcomings of current Department systems in this area should be avoided.
- Many respondents suggested specific features for an automated system. The most frequently requested feature was a program to assist districts in managing client financial management accounts.

The attached charts provide a more detailed analysis of the survey results. An explanation of these charts is presented below.

Response rates for both survey instruments aggregated by district and by district population size. (Attachment C)

Summary of responses to the PSA supervisor/program director questionnaire aggregated by district population size. (Attachment D)

Summary of responses to the survey directed to all PSA staff aggregated by the population size of the respondents' districts. (Attachment E)

Summary of responses to the survey directed to all PSA staff aggregated by respondents' job titles. (Attachment F)

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Rose M. Pandozy  
Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Services and  
Community Development

ATTACHMENT A  
PSA AUTOMATION SURVEY

To Be Completed By PSA Supervisor/Program Manager

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE # \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_

- 8 1) With the exception of WMS or other statewide automated systems, are computers used to support your PSA program currently?

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

If YES, please specify:

- 8 2) Please indicate any computer equipment that you are currently using for PSA or expect to acquire in the near future.

<u>EQUIPMENT</u>	<u># Now Using</u>	<u># Will Acquire</u>
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Personal Computers (desktop)	_____	_____
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Portable (Laptop)	_____	_____
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Local Area Network (LAN)	YES____	NO____
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Other Equipment (Specify)

8 3) Please indicate how many PSA staff you currently have.

Supervisors \_\_\_\_\_

Caseworkers \_\_\_\_\_

8 4) Please list all of the sites in your district in which PSA staff are located. If PSA services in your district are provided by contractors, include contract agency locations.

8 5) Do you believe an automated system could enhance your ability to provide services to PSA clients in your district?

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, indicate how. If no, Why?

8 6) Would you or any of your staff be willing to participate in focus groups related to this PSA system development initiative?

\_\_\_\_\_YES \_\_\_\_\_NO

NAME

TITLE

PHONE #

8 7) Any other comments?

Please make copies of Attachment B and ask each PSA staff person to respond. We ask that you fill out both Attachment A and B, yourself. We encourage you to add any comments, issues, concerns or ideas that you would like us to consider.

ATTACHMENT B  
PSA AUTOMATION SURVEY  
To Be Completed By All PSA Staff

NAME OF DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR NAME AND OTHER IDENTIFYING INFORMATION REQUESTED BELOW IS OPTIONAL

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ TITLE \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE # \_\_\_\_\_

The Department of Social Services is exploring possible options for developing an automated system for Protective Services for Adults (PSA). Please indicate the importance of the following characteristics of an automated PSA system.

8 1) The system should make all PSA forms available electronically.

4	Very Important
3	Somewhat Important
2	No Opinion
1	Not Important

8 2) The system should allow caseworkers and supervisors to create and update case records electronically.

4	Very Important
3	Somewhat Important
2	No Opinion
1	Not Important

8 3) The system should contain customized questions and menus that guide a caseworker through PSA intake, assessment and case management.

4	Very Important
3	Somewhat Important
2	No Opinion
1	Not Important

8 4) The system should have the capacity to generate appropriate referrals and related documents (i.e.: to agency attorney for legal interventions).

4	Very Important
3	Somewhat Important
2	No Opinion
1	Not Important

8 5) The system should allow districts to develop a customized, automated directory of local services and service providers.

- 4 Very Important
- 3 Somewhat Important
- 2 No Opinion
- 1 Not Important

8 6) The system should generate standard reports (i.e.: PSA intake and caseload reports; referral source summary).

- 4 Very Important
- 3 Somewhat Important
- 2 No Opinion
- 1 Not Important

8 7) The system should allow local district staff to generate customized or ad hoc reports.

- 4 Very Important
- 3 Somewhat Important
- 2 No Opinion
- 1 Not Important

8 8) The system should generate reminders, flags, warnings or ticklers about tasks, activities and/or requirements that are coming due or are over due.

- 4 Very Important
- 3 Somewhat Important
- 2 No Opinion
- 1 Not Important

8 9) Please indicate any other thoughts or ideas that you may have about an automated PSA system. Include any ideas that you may have about things that you currently do that could be eliminated or made more efficient (attach additional sheets, if necessary):

8 10) Position: (Please Check One)

- (1) Caseworker
- (2) Senior Caseworker
- (3) Supervisor
- (4) Administrator
- (5) Other