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Putting Families First Webinar

Panel Discussion

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Name: Putting Families First – Panel Discussion

Speakers:

- Russ Barron, Administrator, Welfare Division, Health and Welfare Department – State of Idaho
- Dave McCurley, Global and North America Managing Director, Human Services industry group – Accenture Health & Public Service
- Clarence Carter, Director, Department of Human Services – District of Columbia

Moderator: Fred Kuhn, Publisher – GOVERNING

Length: 57:18

FRED KUHN: Hello, and welcome to today’s event. My name is Fred Kuhn, and I am a publisher of GOVERNING, which publishes GOVERNING magazine, governing.com, and produces several events in the state and local marketplace. I will serve as your moderator today, and wish to thank you for joining us for what I trust will be an informative webinar.

Challenging times to be viewed as an opportunity to reset priorities and approaches, and today we will hear about some innovative service delivery models from across the country. We have two experts with us today; one from the state of Idaho and one from the District of Columbia. Both have significantly improved services to their citizens while providing significant cost savings and better service delivery outcomes for the long term.

I think these perspectives should be useful to those of you who are looking for new ways to lower costs while providing better human service delivery to the citizens.

Joining us today will be Russ Barron, administrator, Welfare Division, Health and Welfare Department from the state of Idaho; Clarence Carter, director of the District of Columbia’s Department of Human Services; and Dave McCurley, global managing director, human services industry from Accenture’s Health & Public Service.

I’d like to thank Accenture for partnering with GOVERNING to put on today’s discussion. You know, Accenture is a recognized leader in systems integration, technology and consulting services worldwide with specialization in health and human services. Accenture helps human services improve customer service, increase business outcomes and efficiencies, and reduce cost. Accenture has been a partner of choice for human service agencies in 28 U.S. states and 25 countries.

So no matter what management level or role within your agency, I think today’s conversation has something to offer each of you.

Let’s begin, and I’d like to introduce to you our first speaker which is Russ Barron. Russ, again, is the administrator of the Welfare Division for our Health and Department of Welfare for the state of Idaho. Now, Russ is responsible for administrating programs known as the self-reliance programs designed to help low income individuals and families. More than 600 employees located around the state and in 28 offices to deliver services such as food stamps, child support, cash assistance, child care assistance and Medicaid eligibility to over 350,000 individuals each year. So, Russ, let me now pass this over to you.

RUSS BARRON: Okay. Thank you, Fred.

I appreciate the opportunity to talk about the great things that are going along in Idaho. You know a lot of people when they think about Idaho they think about potatoes and cold weather and we are proud of the potatoes. That’s important. And there is some cold weather in the mountains, but it is a beautiful state, nonetheless.

Today, I’d like to talk about what we’ve done in Idaho with the new service delivery design and I’m having a little trouble, getting my presentation up there. Sorry about that.

First of all, just a little bit of background information about Idaho, and I'll try to go through this a little bit more quickly than I had anticipated since we do have a little delay here in getting started.

But there is a lot of information on the slides, and I'll just touch on what I think are the most important things but a little bit of background about Idaho is we are a statewide business. We do have 44 counties, 28 offices around the state that was mentioned. We also have two processing centers. But we are a centrally run state. We are centralized and we do business on a statewide basis.

It was mentioned earlier about challenges and how that creates the need to improve and I think with every challenge we need to look for opportunities, and Idaho has certainly faced its share of challenges. And most of those, historically, centered around performance, trying to, you know, to process our services or deliver our services timely, accurately and making sure that the folks who need our services have access to it.

We also, recently, we are in the second or third in the nation for our food stamp caseload growth, so everyone is feeling that crunch and we certainly feel that as well.

Pain points, on this slide, you might look over these and relate to some of these, and maybe have felt the same types of pain that we have. We've had high error rates. We've had high workloads, low staff morale, a lot of problems trying to do the right things and doing things right, as far as our delivering services to customers.

We had these pain points. We had these challenges. We had these needs. And historically, when we had challenges or when we had problems, there were some things that we did to try to overcome those. One of those would be, you know, if our caseload went up, well, we definitely needed more people to continue to be successful.

We were heavy on our reviews to find and fix problems on case reviews and we were also – felt that we were successful if we could just respond to federal mandates and be compliant and we always tried to do that, but there are other measures to look at when it comes to success.

And also we wanted to make sure our pain was spread evenly around the state so we spent a lot of time making sure we could equalize caseloads as best we could and always shifting the workload around and, again, it was painful and we wanted things to be as equal as they could be.

We also had something that we called the gap, and when you look at this chart, you know, we had problems back at – right at the turn of the century. And I say that, and I feel like my grandfather saying that. But I can say that now since we're in a new century.

But back a few years ago when the economy was having problems, we had this gap where the caseload was increasing and we lost a lot of staff. We had several layoffs for a couple of years there which created this gap and we have a similar problem today, only in my opinion, it's much worse than it was back then as far as the economy goes.

But we have a different approach today than what we took back then. We knew we had this gap, and we went to the legislature and said, you know, you've got to help us. We've got to do something different if we want to continue to be successful. And, actually, at that point, we had so many problems, we wanted to improve. We wanted to get to the point where we could be successful. We needed to close this gap.

We talked about, you know, what all we needed to do and why we needed to do it, and once we recognized the place we were in, we were approved for a three-year project to design and replace our automated system. The system that we had at the time was 20 years old, and it just wasn't working for us anymore and it was causing us more problems, it seemed, than it was being helpful.

We were approved. We did receive funding to replace that system, and we knew it would take three years which was still a pretty tight timeframe to do something that major and that big.

And as we got into it, we realized that this wasn't just about replacing technology. We also needed to look at our processes, our business processes, and let them be the foundation for our changes and improvements.

And we knew how tight things were. I talked about the gap. We knew we were in a difficult situation but we had to somehow find capacity within our current workforce to try to improve our performance and deal with the caseloads that were rising at the time.

And we knew that we weren't going to get additional staff to help us do our work as with our historical intervention, and we'd be lucky to keep what we had. We had to think differently, and what we came up with was making sure that we were focusing on business processes and our system redesign.

We had some expectations for our new service delivery design, and, you know, there were some things that we expected to get out of our three-year project. And one of the most important things is, I mentioned before, it was to replace our automated system but it was also an opportunity for us to look at our business processes. And somehow, we needed to marry those and make sure that we could get the most out of both to make the gains that we needed to make.

Knowing that the technology takes a little bit longer to implement, we started with our business processes, an approach we took with, you might have heard, the lean office, six sigma is also another name that comes to mind when people think about lean.

But we wanted to address our challenges. We didn't want to, you know, run up to them. To understand them, address them, make these improvements, make it sustainable. We wanted to standardize and streamline. Make sure we had the consistency across the state, and also have a customer-centric approach.

We talk a lot about customer service and that term, it's actually overused quite a bit to where we sometimes lose the real meaning of what that is. And so we decided to use the terms customer-centric, customer-focused approach, trying to see things through our customers' eyes and their experiences, and trying to make gains in that area. And then, of course, make sure we had the automation solutions that we needed.

I've talked about our approach through all this change. We knew that it would be a major change for us. Like I said, our automated system was 20 years old, and we wanted to make sure we saw things through our customers' eyes, first and foremost.

We also knew that we needed a new automated system and we wanted one that was user-friendly, one that actually had a rules engine, we wanted something that was web-based and we wanted something that would have reporting abilities to help us manage our work, something that would really work for us. And I'll talk a little bit more about that system in a minute.

We also knew that we needed to change the culture, not just how we do the work but how we think about doing our work. And that's something to really pay attention to and we spent a lot of time working and planning with our staff, letting them know what would be different so that we could also change our culture. We made that one of our goals. As we talked about goals and priorities, one of our goals was to make sure that we successfully changed our culture. If you don't do that you can implement a lot of good processes in your culture. If it's not changed where it needs to be, it can kill it.

We also wanted to engage our staff. We wanted them involved in it. One of the main reasons is they're the closest to the customer and we wanted to see things through our customers' eyes so we involved our managers, our caseworkers around the state, to make sure that they were a part of this change and not just something that was done to them but done with them for their success.

And also we wanted to make sure that we had consistency. We wanted to make sure customers could walk into any state in the office or any office in the state, and receive the same level of service. We had issues where that wasn't being done, and we wanted to make sure we had that level of service.

Another important item was to measure the return on investment. As we took steps, and as we made changes along the way, every one, we would calculate what the gain would be in resource savings, time savings, things like that, so that we could take those savings and actually put them somewhere. If you don't do that then it just

disappears on you. We had to work really hard with our operations managers across the state to make sure that we could do that.

Our new service delivery model includes same-day service. That was something that we didn't offer before. We would schedule an appointment and have people come back. We wanted to change that to see as much as we could to deliver services the same day the customer walked into our offices that needed it.

Part of that same-day service involved changing the way we interacted with our customer and what we call informed choice. Having a discussion with them that would help them choose what they need. Not telling them what they need, but listening to their needs and then saying, well, we have these programs, these things to offer. And to do that we had to have people that had a level of knowledge that could explain programs, explain policies, and things like that.

We moved our decision-makers, our caseworkers, up to the front. Typically, you walk into one of our offices. Before, you'd be greeted by a receptionist or a clerical person, and we moved our caseworkers up to that front in the lobby. And so now when a customer walks in, the first person they see is someone who has the level of knowledge that can really explain things and help them and talk to them.

And that was a big change for us, to put our caseworkers up at the front. And after they have that conversation, if things are all in place, they can go ahead and do the interview right there with them and provide that same-day service.

Another item I would mention off this list that's different is the processing centers. We wanted to separate work that would require face-to-face interaction with our customers and that which didn't and in our processing centers, there were alternative ways to interact with our customers instead of face-to-face, and we were able to handle larger volumes of work in our processing centers. And so by consolidating work into these centers, we have achieved great gains as well.

At this point, the majority of the gains that we have experienced and efficiency and effectiveness were achieved through business process changes. We just barely implemented our new automated system. It'll be a month ago tomorrow, so it was on November 3. And we know that we will be seeing additional gains and more efficiencies and effectiveness in the coming months and years.

But up to this point, a lot of it was done because of the business process changes. Again, I've talked about the lean approach that we took in, you know, eliminating wasted steps or unnecessary processes. We were able to improve and sustain our performance and significantly decrease our back-end work by 70 percent and that was just by, you know, moving our staff to the front and the lobbies, doing interviews right then, and providing same-day service as much as possible, and resolving problems and questions at the first point of contact.

We've had huge productivity gains, consistency. We've also heard from our customers that they really appreciate the changes that we've made, and they really appreciate not having to come back at a later time to get the things that they need.

A little bit about our automated system. I mentioned that we implemented IBES—that stands for Idaho Benefits Eligibility System. This was known as the C4 system in California. We looked at a lot of different systems. It was—with the budget that we had and the timeframe that we had and with what the C4 system had to offer Idaho—it was really appealing to us. We knew it was something that was very adaptable. We knew we'd have to make some modifications but this was something we could work with, and this was something that we wanted to build our future on.

To be successful with our implementation, which it was a very successful implementation, and to do that, our business process changes really helped out because they helped us make gains in our performance, change the way we did business, and then it was just a matter of having the technology to come along and support it.

The whole thing worked very well. And so far, like I say, about a month into it, performance in our key areas has not slipped at all. We are very proud of IBES, we're very proud of the project, and the work that's been done to implement it and feel that it's been very successful.

Just to show you just some charts here and some data on productivity gains, in spite of the caseload increases which we're all feeling, this chart in Idaho shows the caseload increases and also shows the staffing levels and the productivity gains in spite of all of that.

Another thing, another chart that kind of shows you here our focus on same-day service and actually trying to process food stamp applications in the first day that it's received, back in 2007, you can see that we were processing about three percent of our applications the first day, and then it took an average of 19 days to process all applications.

We'll jump forward now to 2009 and 25 percent are approved in the first day with a statewide average of eight days it takes to process all of them.

That brings us to our new approach. I talked about how we did things before but now how we approach our improvements and managing our work is different than what we did before and it's a strong focus on processes; making sure that they drive improvements. Technology is critical, and having good technology is very important, and we need that, but we can't ignore the processes and we want to make sure that the technology supports the processes.

And so this was just some of the things that we do now, measuring accuracy at the front end, not after the fact and that is really our quality assurance approach and making sure it's built in at the front and not so reliant on numerous case reviews and finding things and fixing them.

Just some advice for others who may be feeling, you know, some of the same pain points that we were. I know all states have some things in common but also a lot of different issues. But, you know, when it seems like you're in an impossible situation, you know, you just have to think differently and think that there, you know, what are the opportunities here, and these are something to look at, start by creating capacity, the quick things for improvement, you know. Step by step, you get up that mountain.

But, you know, the most important is look at your processes; see how that can be married with automation. Automation takes some time, the process changes take time, pay attention to the culture, the morale, the customer, those types of things, and you can make progress. You can make things different.

I appreciate it. If there's, again, any questions, this is a slide that has some different numbers for people here that, you know, we love to talk about the improvements that we've had. It's been a lot of hard work but now we feel like it's the end of a three-year project. We're not at the end. We're actually at the beginning. Having IBES now really paves the way for our future. We can do a lot of great things, even though we've done great things up to this point.

Thank you.

FRED KUHN: Thank you, Russ. I appreciate that. Now I'd like to introduce Dave McCurley who is global and North America managing director for Accenture's Public Service Human Services industry group. He's been with the firm for 24 years, including 21 years serving government clients at the national, state and local level. So, Dave, I will pass it now over to you.

DAVE MCCURLEY: Okay. Thank you very much, Fred, I appreciate it. I think Clarence may be ready to join us. We were waiting – Clarence, just to let everybody know. Clarence has been juggling budget hearings today. I think many of the state folks that are on the phone can understand what that's like so we've been able to get him in-between so I think he may be ready to go. Clarence, are you on?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Not yet. Clarence is not ready yet.

DAVE MCCURLEY: Okay, okay. So, all right, fine. I thought he was connected but I appreciate the folks that are on, and I really appreciate Russ's story. At Accenture, we've spent a lot of time speaking about the way in which organizations can implement the kinds of changes that Russ is going with and so there was a couple of points I thought were pretty relevant in his discussion and some things that I think Clarence is going to highlight as well.

And one is that, you know, as we go through this, we're seeing organizations around the planet really focus on looking for creative ways to break down the stovepipe ways in which services have historically been delivered. If you think about, you know, the way that we do that in the U.S., you know, they're funded by multiple federal funding streams, often supported by disparate technology solutions and, as most of us know, and have been doing this for a long time, we typically serve the same population of families that are responsive.

The focus of this particular webinar is about putting families first and it's certainly what we've seen in the work that Russ is doing in Idaho and the, you know, the C4 system that they talked about before, the transfer from California that started that. It was all started with, you know, business process orientation that said we're going to start working on trying to link up multiple programs that families are applying for, trying to make it easier for them and think about the different ways in which we can manage that.

Partly to make it seamless and easier on the clients, but partly because at the end of the day the sooner we do a better job of thinking about all of the different benefits that the families are trying to receive, and the quicker we can start delivering all of the different benefits that they need in order to solve the underlying problem, then the faster we're going to get them off all the benefits that they need and back on their own feet, and that's the, you know, the nature of most of the programs that we serve in this is about, you know, getting the family through a particular crisis.

And I heard it described one time is that, you know, if you're a family in America and you have one thing wrong with you, boy, we've got all kinds of programs that can fix you. If you're just unemployed, we can get you unemployment. If you just need housing, we can get you housing. If you just need food stamps, we can get you fed. But the minute you start having three or four or five things all at the same time, then it gets more difficult and you've got to go to multiple locations and multiple places to get that done.

The family focus that we're talking about is about, you know, how do you start thinking about that, and the good news is that today's technology gives us some options to do those kinds of things that we haven't had in the past. I mean, without necessarily having to attack, you know, these huge Legacy applications that are serving all of the different programs that we have. We now have layers of technology that allow us to put things like, you know, a common client index on the front that will allow us to say this date McCurley and the food stamp system is the same date McCurley and the housing system and the same date McCurley and the unemployment system.

And so as a caseworker, I can start taking a look across the multiple programs that may be serving a particular family and see, for example, that, you know, hey, if I'm going to solve the housing problems for this particular family, maybe it makes sense for me to contemplate the fact that they're in a job training program in a certain part of town and maybe I want to try to find them a house in that part of town.

Or maybe if I've got a family that's receiving food stamps, I want to make sure that the school knows about the fact that these kids are on food stamps and should be eligible for the reduced lunch or free lunch program, so we make sure that we're getting as much, you know, good nutrition in this family as possible.

By taking some of those first steps across that, you've got, you know, technology that can allow you to kind of build a bridge across the front of these things, and on the backside, you know, pull the reporting out of the various data stores that go on, again by resolving it and saying, okay, this is the same date McCurley system-to-system, and now I'm going to be able to pull the information that I need to know across that.

And so what that means is, you no longer have to be at the mercy of some, you know, 500 million dollar program to rip and replace all of your Legacy systems before you can start seeing some of these benefits delivered to you and to the citizens that you serve.

You can start putting some of these things together in relatively small chunks. You can transfer in components that work from other places. And frankly, with some of the, you know, service oriented technologies that are available today, you can start even putting kind of service wrappers around some of your Legacy stuff and build new things, using the new technology enabled frameworks. And at the same time, be able to reference the moving parts that are still useable out of your old system.

It gives you a way to gradually phase that in over time, that doesn't mean you have to just sit and wait for the whole thing. That does two things. One, it gives you a way, in tight budget times, to figure out a place to start. And two, it allows you, as Russ talked about in his presentation, focus on some quick wins that are actually going to deliver some value to you both in terms of improved customer service and improved at the lower cost to serve so that you can then go back to your legislature and support the case that says, look, this is not – we're not just automating this stuff just because we like to automate things. We're automating or we're making changes in our program because, at the end of the day, it can actually make us be more efficient in the way that we deliver the service and more effective in combining the services that get delivered.

You know, we've been fortunate enough to have worked with some organizations that are moving well down this ramp and one of them that I would like to highlight real quick is in New York City where we've been working for some time with the Department of Human Services for the city and they had a vision of really trying to figure out how do we connect these things and make it easier for our citizens to apply for the different programs there, and for citizens to understand the different programs that are available.

At the first phase of their program, what I call, they integrated the on-ramp of the services, and they've got 35 different social programs that are now accessible from a single portal. Citizens can apply online. More importantly, citizens can go to people that will provide them assistance like non-government organizations, non-profit organizations that provide service to the same populations, and have those organizations provide them help in figuring out how – what other programs they might be eligible for.

And that has a two-fold impact, right? If I walk into a food bank because my family needs food and that food bank can actually help me apply for food stamps, then, one, I get probably better benefits faster. Two, the resources of the food bank go farther because they get more, you know, state money in the hands of the families that they're serving quicker, because they're able to help them do that.

You know, it's kind of unprecedented in terms, in the U.S., in terms of application of being able to go to that many different programs.

And by the way, that's 35 programs across 15 different agencies and about eight different federal funding sources, all kind of merged together, and thinking of what it takes in order to do that.

The second phase of the work that they're doing is what I lovingly call integrating the off-ramp, cause, again, getting everybody into services faster is good, simpler and more process efficient is very good. But by combining the ability to look across the programs and actually solve the underlying problems that the families are facing and getting them off of all benefits faster and back on their own feet, that's where you start talking about saving real dollars cause that's when you say, you know, we're saving money on the benefits side because we're getting the family on their feet faster.

And, oh, by the way, that's what the family wants, too. And so whether you're looking at it from a physical perspective or a family outcome perspective, it's a win either way.

And, you know just to kind of put that into perspective in terms of the overall business case associated with that, you know, we've done some homework that says if we could shorten the average family stay just on the big four programs that are out there in terms of expenditures: food stamps, T&F, Medicaid, and unemployment. If we could just shorten the average American family's stay on those programs by one week and get them back on their feet a week faster, we'd save over \$45 billion a year in benefits. That's with a 'B'. That's real money.

And so the good news is, again, Russ' example was a great example of saying, well, let's get the processes right, let's get focused on it, let's use the technology to help us automate a better set of processes, and let's focus on getting the services delivered across the family as we go.

I'm being told that Clarence is about ready to go so what I'd like to do at this point is kind of hand this ball back to you, Fred. And see if we can get Clarence on to chat about the things and the vision that he's got for the district.

FRED KUHN: That sounds great. Yeah, I had gotten the word that Clarence is now on our call which is terrific, and we're very glad to have him join us, and so let me introduce to you Clarence right now. He is the director of the District of Columbia's Department of Human Services. He's appointed by Mayor Adrian Fente. Mr. Carter has responsibility for all income assistance support and related welfare -to-work employment programs to include homelessness, childcare services, and social services programs such as adult protective services and teen pregnancy prevention efforts. We're very pleased to have him join us right now, so let me pass this over now to Clarence.

CLARENCE CARTER: Fred, thanks so much. And I'm pleased to be here on this webinar with you this afternoon, and what I wanted to do is to talk you through what it is that we are attempting to do in the district, very much along the lines with the rest that has been shared with you this afternoon.

And we call our initiative in the district the person first. And the rationale for that name is – it really comes out of our thinking that it is about the person that we are doing this work. It's not about the programs that we administer but it's actually about that individual or family. And so we want to go beyond the program to put the person first that we are attempting to serve.

And it comes out of our thinking on this has been evolving for quite some time. It's actually before my tenure with district government to my time as commissioner, as social services in Virginia and my time with the Federal Office of Community Services. But we've been able to crystallize the work and our vision around a very unnecessary tragedy that we had here in the district.

In January of 2008, Sheriff's Marshals went to execute an eviction of a family for failure to pay rent. And apparently the Sheriff's Marshals have to do an investigation of the premises prior to serving the notice. And when they knocked on the door and were greeted, to do the investigation, there was an amazing stench that emanated from the home. And they went in the home to find four dead children, ages 16 to 8, in different rooms in the home. The mother answered the door, and the long story short is the mother had, over the course of at least the last year, murdered these four children and lived in the home with them.

The investigation that ensued, and our Office of Inspector General did an investigation at the request of the mayor, found that several agencies of district government served this family, but the serving of the family wasn't in any way connected. Whether it was the school system or my agency, the Department of Human Services or the Child and Family Services Administration, all serving this family, but that service was in no way coordinated.

This family actually fell through the cracks of our system, and what the headline of the attorney general's report is that each of the agencies were doing their job, but they were doing them in isolation, and that there was a potential to avert this tragedy had the agencies worked in conjunction and in coordination.

And so it brings me to an explanation of the challenges that we have with our safety net system, and as, of course, I don't have to tell this group, our safety net is built around a number of different categorical programs. All are meant to address some aspect of the human condition.

But the challenges with each of those programs being developed and in the silos they are developed, they are not built to work in a comprehensive fashion to address the needs of individuals and families. And we know that most of the families that we serve need more than one of the programs of our safety net. But yet, again, they weren't built to be operated in that fashion.

The first problem with our system is that it was constructed as a system of silos, okay? And in those silos, there's not a shared vision for what we hope to accomplish for those families. I think it was interesting, as I was listening

to Dave wrap up, and he talked about, if we could simply reduce by one week the number of our families on the major programs, we would save \$45 billion.

But yet we don't have a shared vision for what we hope to accomplish for those individuals and families beyond the actual getting benefits to them. The silos of those shared visions are part of the problem.

The second problem that our system has is displaced objectives. Again, we focus on the administration of benefits, not human well being. And it is our goal; we measure the success of our programs as to whether or not we've delivered a unit of service.

For instance, in my time as Director of the food stamp program for the country, we were measured on whether or not we delivered the benefit to the person or family who was eligible to receive it. Whether we delivered that benefit in the right amount and whether we delivered it in the appropriate timeframe. Those were the things that we were measured on.

Now, we were not measured on whether or not we reduced hunger which is actually what the program was established to do. We measure inputs and I believe that our objectives were misplaced in that regard.

And so we don't, and our final problem is that we don't focus on bringing individuals and families through the system. And we, actually, the construction of the system helps to trap families in the very set of circumstances we hope to extricate them from.

Now for instance, as we attempt to grow the capacity of someone through, let's say, the TANUS program, grow their earnings capacity, we then have to reduce their food stamps, dollar for dollar, and long before that family is in a position where they are able to assume that obligation on their own, and so therefore, again, with us not being able to think about these things in conjunction, we force individuals and families that we serve to make decisions that could trap them in the very set of circumstances that we attempt to extricate them from.

The notion of the person first, okay, is to understand first what are the presenting needs of that individual or family that we are serving. Understand that first and then bring together a mix of benefits, goods and services with the goal of ultimately extricating that individual or family from whatever that circumstance is.

It is not just to deliver a benefit, good or service but it is how do you lift that individual or family beyond the need for those services? Literally transforming the way our human services system works as not a system which simply delivers benefits but a system for human well being. And this is growing individuals and families beyond the circumstance in which they exist.

As part of my work in trying to figure this out, I actually thought some years back that we needed to have a whole new technology to be able to operate in this person-first manner, and my thought process was, you know, you have all of these Legacy systems that were built to do their individual work so you were going to have to have a new technology to be able to think in a person-centric way.

And we had a couple of seminars where we brought together technology leaders from all across the country to help us look at this issue, and this is about five years ago. And what the technology leaders said to us at that time, and that's depicted in the slide that you're looking at now, is that the issue in operating the system that you are talking about is not one of technology. The technology is very mature to solve this problem. Your issue is one of turf and politics and process. And if you can actually move those out of your way, the technology to do this work is relatively available to you.

And so what I want to begin to bring to a close is that interoperable system that would better serve individuals and families. And so what you see in front of you here now is those – those boxes are representative of programs or agencies that serve individuals singularly. You could say they're child welfare and, you know, and food stamps or housing administration or whatever. But they are singular programs.

What you see next is the individuals that would be served by those programs. And so we just continue to bring more people in and you'll notice that the colors of the individuals are representative of the service that they are

coming into the system for. Those colors are representative of, of course, those agencies that are serving them. And then, of course, behind them now is representative of the individuals who manage those programs and the caseworkers of those programs are the ones that are in front of them.

One of the things that we have done in the district is create a technology investment review board to bring together, if you will, all the agency heads of the district programs, around a shared technological infrastructure. And so you will now notice a proposed technology that actually connects those agencies. And then what you'll begin to see is information moving from the individual programs into a shared architecture, if you would.

What we then find is that helps us serve the individuals that we are serving in a better way. And what we also noticed is, this is represented by beginning to bring the individuals together, is that we are serving the same individual family oftentimes across these programs.

Now what you notice is that the colors of the individuals who are serving are changing and that is representative of the programs actually understanding that we are serving multiple clients, that we are not single-purpose agencies but that we are actually part of a multi-disciplinary team for human well being, and also you've noticed that the colors of the individuals have changed because that represents that there are multiple needs.

So that we have a system that understands that it's not a family that simply needs housing but it needs housing, it needs food stamps, it needs health care, in order to be able to help grow its capacity, and so we're seeing that family as a more whole and connected individual or family which we're trying to serve. And what this is depicted is how we can again use alerts in the system to understand particular challenges that are attended to an individual or family that we're serving.

And what we're depicting here with this next part is how the individuals can actually use that technology, and this was sort of, you know, sort of self-service kiosk, and their ability to be able to use the technology to make their life's work and connect that to the enterprise.

Then how, of course, this connected system allows us to use information in a much more powerful way to grow the capacity of the individuals and families that we serve. And then, we show the families are getting closer in being able to serve the individuals and families in a much more robust way than we currently do.

And then you'll notice as we bring together actually pieces of the individual programs or agencies, what that is depicting is that, for instance, intake is a part of every one of those agencies. So we can potentially serve an intake function centrally without having to actually have to duplicate that function over and over and over again. As we look at our agencies and our programs, as part of an enterprise, we can then have an enterprise solution for serving them.

So this is a system that we are attempting to build in the district, and it would help us to avert the kind of tragedies that we have but more importantly it would help us to become an entity that grows the capacity of the individuals and families that we serve and have a human services system which is focused on human well being and not just dispensing benefits, goods and services.

And that's what we wanted to share with you today about how we are moving forward in the district.

FRED KUHN: Clarence, thank you for that. That was incredible.

[End of Panel Discussion – Q&A Session Follows](#)

Webinar Transcript



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Putting Families First Webinar

Questions and Answers Session

- Consulting • Technology • Outsourcing

Name: Putting Families First – Questions and Answers Session

Speakers:

- Russ Barron, Administrator, Welfare Division, Health and Welfare Department – State of Idaho
- Dave McCurley, Global and North America Managing Director, Human Services industry group – Accenture Health & Public Service
- Clarence Carter, Director, Department of Human Services – District of Columbia

Moderator: Fred Kuhn, Publisher – GOVERNING

Length: 10:14

FRED KUHN: We have – they came across the wire here from a number of our attendees, some questions and it was for all three speakers. So, we’re going to turn now to the Q&A portion of our session here and let me start by asking a question to Russ.

Russ, we had a couple of similar questions that had to do with changing the culture and let me read this one to you. It says “As with many organizations, change sometimes brings resistance. How do you address resistance to change within a new service delivery model?”

RUSS BARON: That’s a really good question and it’s so true. One of the most difficult things to deal with and, I think, one of the most important things to think about is recognizing that it is difficult and put some time and effort into it. One of the things that we did was to – we sent some of our leadership individuals around the state to each office to talk to staff, talk about how the way things were at the time, and talk about how things would be different in the road to getting there. And as the solutions were getting closer and closer, we would go out and we would talk to them and tell them, here’s what’s different and here’s how your work will be different. Here’s how you need to think about it different and be able to take questions from them and be able to answer them. That was really important to staff to understand the connection between where we are and where we’re going and how culture was such a big part of that.

We would also, in those sessions, again, take questions and comments, and ask them questions and have them participate and feel a part of the whole thing. You know, we don’t want to jerk them along. We want to take them along with us so that when we get to the place where we have solutions, they’re there, and they were a part of building that. They had buy-in, in what was done. And each step that you take, you’re building trust along the way, and that’s important when you’re trying to change the culture.

FRED KUHN: Terrific. Thank you. Clarence, this next one is coming to you. It said “How do you think—” I’m sorry, it says “Do you think it is possible to consider human well being and design a delivery system to address this in these challenging economic times? And how do you do this in today’s environment?”

CLARENCE CARTER: Well, I believe, actually, these challenging economic times help to drive this because we are currently spending billions and billions of dollars in doing this in a very disconnected and duplicative way. And so the degree to which we look at doing this as an enterprise, then it actually reduces our costs because we are making these expenditures in each of the silos and so by looking at this as an enterprise then you don’t have to continue to duplicate the costs of actually running all of these different parallel systems. I actually think that the challenging economic times create an environment which is more conducive to us taking this human well being and enterprise approach.

FRED KUHN: Great. I’ve got another one that actually is a nice pat on the back. It says “Great work. How far along are you in the process and how are you getting buy-in from all the agencies?”

CLARENCE CARTER: We are, I would say, we are still in our infant stages in that we are framing the enterprise approach, that our mayor has developed a piece of legislation which would allow us to better coordinate our

delivery of service and develop a combined data system and how this has to happen. There are two things that are important.

The first is executive leadership. If there is not some entity above each of the silos which is demanding that this will happen and not taking 'No' for an answer, then it cannot happen. So there must be strong executive leadership.

And then after the strong executive leadership, there has to be a champion at the implementing level. The way that we set this up in the district is the mayor has tasked myself as the chief technology officer to lead all of the agency heads in building this enterprise architecture and the shared person approach. So if there is not first strong leadership above each of the silos and then a strong implementing structure, you could never contemplate this.

FRED KUHN: Great. Dave, this next one is coming to you, and it says "In regards to Russ' story about tech enabling change and increased efficiency on a lower budget," it says "we've heard some of the folks talked about this today but in your role what are some other places where you've seen this type of activity?"

DAVE MCCURLEY: Well, I'll break it into a couple of components. First is, again, the things that I think Russ highlighted in his presentation, we're starting with some of the business process change in making that, and certainly he's a poster child for doing that. We've also seen – we've had some success working with some clients on the healthcare side and also I know Louisiana's done some things as well where they've focused on the process change, seen it in our client in Norway social services program where they started trying to figure out how we'd streamline the overall processes and really, the advantage again is they saw some business benefits long before they started really applying technology.

The second thing is when they applied the technology; they were paving a new car path instead of paving over an old, inefficient car path in terms of the way in which the services were being delivered.

Then certainly on the technology front, I talked a little bit about the work that the city of New York's doing with Access NYC and HHF Connect, and I mean that's a great example of again focusing on the process first and then really applying some significant technology innovation to make a difference.

FRED KUHN: Great, great. Russ, another one for you. It says "What challenges did you face as you moved decision makers upfront?"

RUSS BARON: Oh, those were huge challenges because, of course, people have their office space, some have cubicles, some have walled offices, and so, you know, that would be difficult for anyone when you want to change your work space. So that was big and, of course, we had to deal with that, but what really helped was when that happened, and like I say, we built trust along the way, we paid attention to the culture, tried to include staff as we made changes, and when they actually made that change and saw the difference it made to the customers, as I would go back out and talk with them, they were so appreciative of the change that we had made and even some would say, I didn't like this but now I can see the benefit of it, and just the satisfaction of helping customers right there in the lobby and the gains that we had made there. It was worth it all for them. Of course, there's always some that still, you know, will struggle with it but they really saw the benefit of it and then also noticing that if we can help our customers as much as we can that same day, then that means less work later on to have to do. So, and also improve performance.

FRED KUHN: Great. I have one last question here that we can get in on our time limit and I'll throw it out to the panel, especially you, Dave. But it says "Are you experiencing support from the federal funding sources in breaking down silos to build the resources needed?"

DAVE MCCURLEY: Well, I'll just say that we're certainly experiencing more cooperation from the federal funding sources than we probably have in the last decade and starting to break those things down. Certainly, their policies – it takes a long time for a policy to get implemented and go through the processes that they've got to do that, but, you know, I've heard on multiple occasions both F&S and ACF talking about new ways of trying to work together and looking for innovative solutions willing to support waivers or folks asking for, you know, exceptions or

special consideration as they're looking at a program that can do that. And certainly I think that the good news, as I look at the appointments from the current administration and some of the key decision making positions, whether it's over at HHS or over at Agriculture or some of the other agencies that are focused on this, their appointment, a lot of folks who have hands-on state experience of trying to implement these things in the field, I can't think of better folks to help us make that change than some of the folks that have experienced the frustration of seeing it not work in the past.

CLARENCE CARTER: Fred, if I could just in. I think Dave is exactly right. There is a willingness on the part of our federal partners but their challenge is figuring out the way because they have to. They are, of course, stuck in their regulation and policy and in trying to figure out how to get beyond that, it is absolutely a work-in-progress but there is a willingness that there has never been before to explore it.

FRED KUHN: Great. Well, thank you. And in closing, I want to be respectful to our hour long commitment so I'd like to thank everyone for joining us on the call today. We had a lot of great questions that we just didn't get a chance to get to, so I want to thank you all for your participation. I also want to thank Clarence, Russ and Dave for your presentations today and I want to give a special thanks again to our partners at Accenture for bringing this important discussion to our audience. So, thank you all, really, for your participation and joining us.