

An Exploratory Study of
FoodShare Modernization
in Milwaukee County

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, is the largest federal nutrition program and serves more than 28 million low-income individuals each month. Milwaukee County has the second highest FoodShare (Wisconsin's name for SNAP) participation rate in the country among urban areas. As of December 2008, the number of FoodShare recipients reached a record high of 162,310 recipients, representing a 56.8 percent increase in FoodShare participation since December 2000. Despite an increasing caseload, funding for FoodShare administration has continued to decrease.

Milwaukee County officials have utilized technology to make FoodShare more accessible and to better manage the caseload of FoodShare recipients. These initiatives, termed "FoodShare modernization," were evaluated by Hunger Task Force in order to advocate for the best implementation of FoodShare processing. This exploratory study presents data that were derived from interviews, observations, statistical analysis of pre-existing data and outreach initiatives.

Major Findings from this study include:

- Milwaukee County can learn from other state's modernization initiatives
- The Milwaukee County Verification Center could improve from a published and well publicized policy manual, clear communication between management and staff about upcoming modernization initiatives and an increase in the number of staff processing cases.
- The ACCESS website can empower and educate FoodShare recipients
- Providing support and training to community partners would increase outreach and education within the community
- Long term data collection in the Verification Center is needed to determine whether Milwaukee County's modernization initiatives are helping the client population receive FoodShare benefits faster

I. INTRODUCTION

Milwaukee County has consistently struggled with issues of poverty and hunger. However, 2008 witnessed unprecedented levels of poverty and hunger, displayed by high poverty levels, increasing unemployment rates, the demand for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the congestion of public benefit issuance locations, and record requests for assistance from emergency food pantries. Unemployment rates in Milwaukee County have reached the highest rates since 2004, at 6.3 percent.¹ As of 2007, there has been a 15 percent increase in the Milwaukee residents that are living in poverty.² In recent years, the cost of food has skyrocketed, making the minimum cost to feed a family of four (for a week) reach \$118.20.³

As a result of rising food prices and increased job loss, the FoodShare program has served an increasing number of families while facing a decreasing budget for benefit issuance programs. Milwaukee County has been heavily affected due to its high case load and compounding administrative difficulties. Milwaukee County served 162,310 FoodShare clients in December 2008, one-third of the total FoodShare recipients in Wisconsin.

In response to the increased caseload, county officials have turned to technology to make FoodShare more accessible to eligible populations and to better manage the caseload of current FoodShare recipients. The incorporation of technology into FoodShare processing system, termed “FoodShare modernization,” will be evaluated throughout this exploratory report.

¹ Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Historical unemployment rates, excel spreadsheet: 1990-2008 available at http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/oea/unemploy_rates_labor_stats.htm

² City of Milwaukee information from the 2007 American Community Survey and 2000 U.S. Census available at http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en

³ US Department of Agriculture’s Thrifty Food Plan report for June 2008 available at <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/USDAFoodCost-Home.htm>

II. BACKGROUND

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP (formerly known as the Food Stamp Program) is a federal entitlement program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). SNAP is the largest federal nutrition program and currently serves more than 28 million low-income individuals each month. Eligibility for the program is based on household income and other non-financial criteria. Benefits are distributed monthly onto an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card that can be used at over 171,000 retail stores nationwide to purchase food products. Appropriation for SNAP recipients average \$96 per person and \$215 per household each month.⁴ In addition to financial assistance for food purchases, SNAP provides direct certification into free school breakfast and lunch programs and nutritional education on healthy and active life-style choices.⁵

THE FOODSHARE PROGRAM IN WISCONSIN

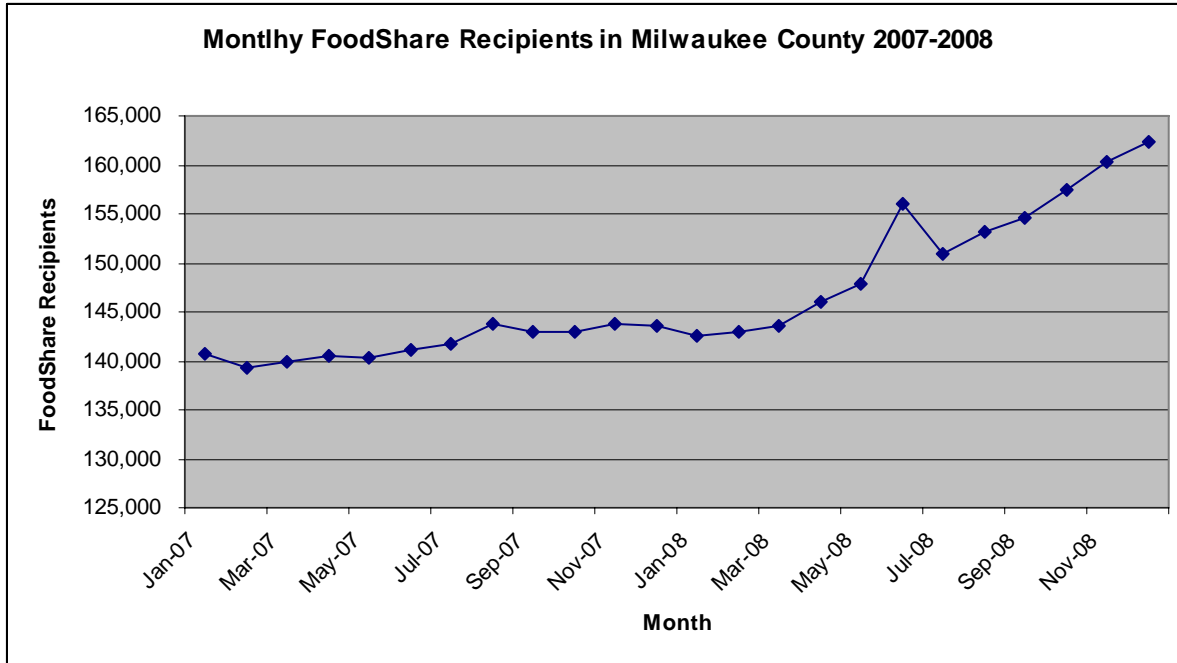
The USDA is responsible for establishing national regulations for the SNAP program; however each state is responsible for administering SNAP benefits to eligible populations. SNAP, called FoodShare in Wisconsin, is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS). Wisconsin residents can apply for FoodShare online through the ACCESS website, at local county or tribal agencies or by telephone. The ACCESS website allows potential recipients to evaluate their eligibility for FoodShare, apply for FoodShare and maintain an existing case.

In Milwaukee County, FoodShare cases are processed through Milwaukee County's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Services are available online, by telephone and in person at the Marcia P. Coggs Human Services Center (Coggs Center) and the George Robles Service Center (Robles Center). The Robles Center is an application center, handling only new applicants applying for FoodShare. The Coggs Center processes on-going FoodShare cases and new applicants. Both are located in the city of Milwaukee within Milwaukee County.

The volume of FoodShare recipients in Milwaukee County has increased dramatically in 2007 and 2008. In December 2008, the number of FoodShare recipients reached a record high of 162,310 recipients. These numbers represent a 56.8 percent increase in FoodShare participation since 2000 in Milwaukee County.

⁴ Overview of the SNAP program is available at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodStamps/>.

⁵ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Fact Sheet available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/FSP/snap.htm>



Source Data: Wisconsin Department of Health Services' FoodShare Data at <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/em/rsdata/fs-case-load-recv-by-cy.htm>. Note: Spike in FoodShare participation in June 2008 is attributed to Emergency FoodShare distribution, a result of severe flooding in Milwaukee County.

FOODSHARE MODERNIZATION IN MILWAUKEE COUNTY

The term *FoodShare modernization* refers to methods used to increase the efficiency and accessibility of the FoodShare program. Modernization has been applied to several SNAP programs in the United States. Florida and Utah are cited as premier states successfully implementing modernization initiatives. Modernization initiatives include, but are not limited to:

Modernization Initiative	Description
Automated Voice Response (AVR) telephonic services	Clients can apply for benefits, recertify their case, report changes to a case, perform a telephonic signature for a newly open case, and/or check the status of a case by telephone
Call Center	A statewide or regional call center where clients can ask questions and get information about a case
Online services	Clients can apply for benefits, provide an electronic signature, report changes, and/or check the status of a case online.
Auto Interview Scheduling	Clients can schedule interviews by phone or online
Document Imaging	Verification documents are scanned, stored and viewed electronically
Community Partners	Community-based organizations provide SNAP related services
Virtual Training	Employees are trained with the use of computers and/or internet instead of a traditional classroom setting

Beginning in 1997, modernization initiatives have emerged as a way to increase participation in public assistance programs, decrease the time spent processing cases and integrate modern technology into benefit issuance programs. In 2007, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities compiled a list of more than 20 states and territories that have begun planning for or have implemented call centers, online services, and document imaging in their SNAP programs. (A list of states that have implemented modernization initiatives are listed in Appendix A.)

Milwaukee County officials have implemented several changes to the FoodShare administration process. The first of many changes was the transition from an individual caseload model to a single caseload model. The individual caseload model allowed for each caseworker to manage all aspects of a case for a set group of clients. Under the individual caseload model a caseworker's duties included: performing an intake interview with a client, accepting verification documents, issuing or denying benefits, performing the annual review, making changes to the case and answering any questions that clients had.

The single caseload model allows for all workers within DHHS to collectively own and maintain all of the cases within the County. Under the single caseload model, workers are specialized into departments that handle one section of a case. The Intake Unit, Verification Center, Call Center and Inquiries Units are responsible for one aspect of a case. The purpose of specialization was to increase efficiency and competency of workers at a specific task. This model creates a work environment that is easy to monitor and is intended to create convenience for the client.

Recent additions to Milwaukee County's modernization efforts took place at the Verification Center in the Cogs Center. Verification Center employees are responsible for processing any document that is submitted to the agency. County officials are planning to implement an electronic case file in conjunction with an image scanning system in March 2009. With the new technology in place, Verification Center workers will no longer receive paper verification documents. Images will be scanned into the system when they are received and will be accessible to any County employee afterwards. The documents will be tracked electronically by supervisors and managers, which will increase data and worker monitoring. The goal of document imaging and an electronic case file is to increase ease for the workers, allow accurate tracking of documents submitted to the agency, decrease paperwork and improve efficiency in case processing.

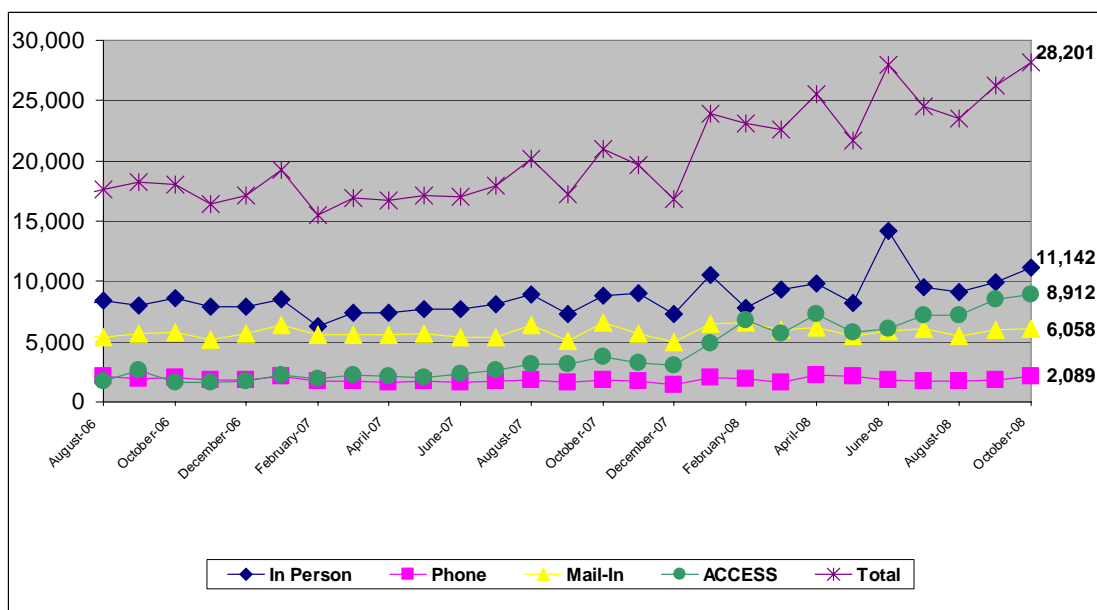
THE ACCESS WEBSITE

The ACCESS website, a form of FoodShare modernization, is available throughout the state of Wisconsin. It was modeled after the ACCESS Florida website. The website's functions include:

Website Features	Capabilities
Am I Eligible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An assessment tool that can determine if a user is eligible for FoodShare, medical assistance and/or other assistance programs.
Apply For Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete application (including electronic signature) for FoodShare and medical assistance programs.
Check My Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to up-to-date benefit information about FoodShare, medical assistance programs and care taker supplement benefits.
Report My Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online change reporting system for current cases.

Over 87,000 FoodShare applications were completed via the ACCESS website between June 2006 and October 2008.⁶ Since the creation of the ACCESS website in 2004, 305,277 self assessments have been completed through the *Am I Eligible* tool.⁷ Since August 2006, the number of ACCESS applications has increased drastically due to increased advertising within Milwaukee County. In August 2004, the ACCESS website was the least utilized method for applying for benefits. However, in October of 2008, 8,912 ACCESS applications were received, making the ACCESS website the second most used form of application submission behind applications submitted in person.⁸

Wisconsin's Health Care, FoodShare and Family Planning Applications, 2008



Source Data: Wisconsin DHS Eligibility Management ACCESS Utilization Report. Note: Spike in FoodShare participation, in June 2008, is attributed to Emergency FoodShare distribution, a result of severe flooding.

⁶ Wisconsin Department of Health Services' Eligibility Management (Income Maintenance) Complete ACCESS Utilization Report available at <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/em/access/reports/fullreport.htm>

⁷ The ACCESS website originally featured the *Am I Eligible* function only. Additional features were added in 2006.

⁸ Wisconsin Department of Health Services' Eligibility Management (Income Maintenance) Complete ACCESS Utilization Report available at <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/em/access/reports/fullreport.htm>

Although modernization initiatives in Milwaukee County strive to prevent people from having to come to the Coggs Center and Robles Center for services, four computers are available at the Coggs Center for ACCESS website use. Computers are located in the Fair Hearings area. Clients do not need an appointment to use the computers. A county employee is available at the client's request to help with the ACCESS computers.

THE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

The DHHS Modernization Initiative Community Partners, known as the Community Partnership program, is based on a similar initiative that Florida successfully implemented. The Florida Community Partnership Network (CPN) was created in 2005 to provide additional access points where clients can apply for SNAP benefits. Milwaukee County's Community Partnership serves as a network of community organizations (public and private) that provide information and services on how to manage all aspects of a case on the ACCESS website.

The Community Partnership's goal is to recruit agencies into an educational program that provides them with the information and resources to promote ACCESS to clients. Community partners are invited to training meetings about the ACCESS website, FoodShare and Medical Assistance programs. A county employee serves as a community liaison to Community Partnership member sites. There are four levels of partnership:

Level	Partner Responsibilities
Platinum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide assistance with completing the overall application process (e.g., submitting required verification) • Provide technical assistance with the computer and ACCESS application • Provide access to computers for ACCESS website use • Provide access to a telephone and fax machine for customers to apply by phone or submit forms by fax • Provide brochures and promotional materials on modernization initiatives
Gold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical assistance with the computer and ACCESS application • Provide access to computers for ACCESS website use • Provide access to a telephone and fax machine for customers to apply by phone or submit forms by fax • Provide brochures and promotional materials on modernization initiatives
Silver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access to a telephone and fax machines for customers to apply by phone or submit forms by fax • Provide brochures and promotional materials on modernization initiatives
Bronze	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide brochures and promotional materials on modernization initiatives

Source Data: Modernization Initiative Community Partners Information Session PowerPoint

As of January 2009, there are 35 community Partners in DHHS' Modernization Initiative Community Partners Program.⁹

⁹ A list of DHHS Community Partners is listed in Appendix I.

HUNGER TASK FORCE'S ROLE IN MODERNIZATION

Hunger Task Force is a private, non-profit community organization that exists to prevent and alleviate hunger. Hunger Task Force has initiated several programs to publicize, improve, and create FoodShare modernization efforts in Milwaukee County in order to advocate for the most accessible and efficient nutritional program.

Hunger Task Force has played an active role in developing the content and layout of the current ACCESS website. Between 2004 and 2006, Hunger Task Force contracted with the state of Wisconsin to form focus groups, comprised of community members and food pantry volunteers, that helped develop the content and design of ACCESS website screens. In 2007, Hunger Task Force donated its time to collect feedback on the online FoodShare application, available on the ACCESS website. Information was gathered when Hunger Task Force piloted the ACCESS program in several food pantries in Milwaukee County.

In March 2007, Hunger Task Force assembled local, state and federal officials at the Milwaukee County FoodShare Summit, a two day conference at the Wingspread Conference Center in Racine, Wisconsin. The summit's goal was to improve the operation of the FoodShare program in Milwaukee County. As a result, the FoodShare Steering Committee was created to serve as a collaborative workgroup for FoodShare in Milwaukee County. Meetings are attended by representatives from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service, Wisconsin's Department of Health and Family Services, Milwaukee County's Department of Health and Human Services, a Milwaukee County labor union and Huger Task Force. The committee meets quarterly to discuss modernization efforts, report on FoodShare initiatives and implement strategies that create increase access to and efficiency of FoodShare.

Hunger Task Force periodically surveys low income people and provides recommendations to county and state administrators on the effects of FoodShare modernization. In November 2008, the annual Coggs Center "churning survey" was performed by Hunger Task Force to evaluate customer satisfaction levels and "churning rates." "Churning" is when clients experience interruptions in their benefits during the six month reporting process or the twelve month review. "Churning" results from Milwaukee County's inability to timely and effectively administer the program due to staffing and budget constraints. Information obtained from surveys is used to help educate legislators, community members and advocates on the current status of FoodShare modernization and its affect on FoodShare recipients.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this research is to examine the Community Partnership Program, assess the functionality of the ACCESS website for FoodShare clients and understand the structure and policies surrounding FoodShare modernization. This research reports barriers and difficulties with promoting the ACCESS website, recommends outreach and education tactics for FoodShare modernization and recommends solutions to improve the quality of service in the Coggs Center.

III. METHODOLOGY

Data presented in this exploratory study were derived from interviews, observations, statistical analysis of pre-existing data and outreach initiatives. Data were gathered during the fall and winter of 2008. DHHS staff, Hunger Task Force staff, advocacy groups and six state public benefit administrative offices provided historical, statistical and anecdotal information that contributed to this report. Four research methods contributed to the findings: an overview of states' modernization initiatives, an analysis of Milwaukee's County Verification Center, observations of ACCESS website users and analysis of Community Partnership recruitment.

Primary informants for the Verification Center exploratory study included 11 Verification Center workers, two supervisors and four managerial staff. Interviews focused on the history of modernization in Milwaukee County, the process of administering public assistance, staffing characteristics within the Verification Center and changes to policies, training methods, and staffing levels. The 11 Verification Center workers were selected by management based on scheduling and availability. The supervisors and managerial staff were selected based on availability and knowledge on the subject matter. Interviews were conducted between September 25 and October 27, 2008. Statistical records for employee performance and attendance rates were extracted from DHHS Monthly Dashboard reports, Quarterly Report Cards, and monthly records for the Verification Center.

Phone interviews were conducted with representatives in Florida, Louisiana, Arizona, Pennsylvania, Utah, and Ohio. These states were chosen because they implemented modernization programs similar to those in Milwaukee County (i.e. an individual caseload, community partnership program, document scanning, etc.). Advocacy groups from each of the states were also interviewed (interview questions for DHHS staff and out of state agencies are located in Appendix B through F).

ACCESS website observations took place November 5 through December 23, 2008 in the Coggs Center. Observations were performed on weekdays during peak hours, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Any ACCESS computer users were offered the option of answering questions regarding their knowledge and experience with the website. Observation sheets were coded with computer users' responses as well as observations made about them by Hunger Task Force staff. Observations are not a representative sample of the ACCESS users in the Coggs Center; however, observations serve as a beginning assessment to the barriers surrounding the ACCESS website. (The observation sheet questionnaire can be found in Appendix G.)

Data collected for Community Partnership observations are based on recruitment visits, email correspondence and feedback from pantries within Hunger Task Force emergency food network. Hunger Task Force's Food Department staff provided a list of 16 pantries that were recommended for the Community Partnership program based on high rankings by Hunger Task Force and number of volunteers available.

The results of this study are limited by convenience sampling (interviews, observations, and the selection of potential Community Partnership sites) and the subjective nature of observations. The selection method of staff, for DHHS interviews, could lead to a bias due to the management selecting staff in a non-random process. Thus, certain findings may not be representative of the entire population, but they will serve as preliminary data that should encourage future in-depth studies of modernization initiatives.

IV. RESULTS

The findings and recommendations of this report are represented in a variety of formats due to the multi-faceted structure of modernization initiatives in Milwaukee County. Data are presented below in the following categories: assessment of modernization initiatives nationwide, Verification Center analysis, ACCESS website observations and assessment of Milwaukee County’s Community Partnership program. Overall recommendations for Milwaukee County’s FoodShare modernization initiatives, resulting from the cumulative data, and Hunger Task Force’s follow-up initiatives will be detailed on page 26.

MODERNIZATION INITIATIVES NATIONWIDE

Interviews were conducted with advocacy groups and SNAP administration staff in six states outside of Wisconsin. States were selected because they are in different stages of development and implementation of modernization initiatives and each state has implemented initiatives that Milwaukee County currently has or will be implementing in the future. Interview objectives were to determine current modernization efforts, upcoming modernization efforts, barriers to implementing initiatives, and outcomes of current (pilot) programs at the state or county level. Information references in this section were acquired from state websites, program overview documents, interviews with advocacy groups and interviews with state public benefit office representatives. The following chart represents the highlights of each state’s SNAP program.

A Sample of SNAP Modernizations Initiatives Implemented Nationwide

State	Modernization Initiatives	Outcomes To Date
<i>Arizona</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document imaging • Electronic case file • Telephone interviews • Customer Service Center/Call Center • Report Changes via the telephone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the testing stage for many modernization initiatives • Few definitive outcomes to date for implemented modernization initiatives
<i>Florida</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online applications • Electronic case file • Document imaging • Automated tracking of case activities and casework • Community Partnership Program • Call Centers with Automated Voice Response (AVR) • Telephone interviews • Reduced verification requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased SNAP processing accuracy • High use of modernization initiatives, by SNAP recipients • Approximately 90 percent of applications are submitted using the online application

State	Modernization Initiatives	Outcomes To Date
<i>Louisiana</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an electronic application • Developing implementation plan for a Call Center • Implementing a pilot program for document imaging • Automated Voice Response (AVR) • Where possible, verification documents can be scanned into the system and emailed to a parish (county) office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document imaging pilot has experienced several difficulties, but improvements are being made before state-wide implementation • Many modernization programs have been delayed due to limited funding • Implemented a modernization business plan that prioritizes modernization initiatives
<i>Ohio</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification documents can be faxed • Verification documents and applications can be submitted to community locations (i.e. libraries) • Document imaging • Single caseload model • Electronic case file • Case processing Center/Call Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document imaging allows for easier tracking of document and more efficient processing
<i>Pennsylvania</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online application • Various forms of document imaging implemented in counties • Electronic case file • Simplified reporting • Single caseload model • Online training of workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplified reporting has significantly reduced the amount of documents SNAP applicants need to submit • Document imaging prevents the inefficiencies of the paper case file • Single caseload approach allows SNAP applicants to see a worker faster because case workers do not have appointments
<i>Utah</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Center/Call Center • Online application • Telephone interviews that are scheduled by the applicants • Verification documents can be faxed • Electronic case file • Document Imaging • Bar-coded documents • Tele-commuting • Online training sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bar-coded documents make it easy to track and file documents • Electronic case file system notifies workers when a new document has been scanned into the system

Modernization initiatives have varying results in several states. For example, Louisiana has experienced difficulty in integrating document imaging into its parishes' working environment; however, Ohio workers have reported that document imaging has helped to increase efficiency of case processing.

Outcomes of Successful Modernization Initiatives

Louisiana
Louisiana’s SNAP program has received recognition and “bonus” funding as a result of the state’s timeliness rate when processing SNAP cases, which has reached as high as 98 percent. The federal regulation for expedited SNAP benefits is seven days; however, Louisiana’s SNAP program implemented a four-day expedited policy resulting in an improved timeliness rate.
Pennsylvania
Some Pennsylvania counties utilize an electronic case file system. In those counties, there is a web-based application registration system. Once an application is registered, any worker can see where an application is in the system. Applications are registered to ensure that none are lost. These counties have a comprehensive coding system to label and identify documents within a case. Currently, there are over 500 different types of documents in the system for all of the public assistance programs, which makes document identification easier for workers.
Florida
Florida has decreased error rates for the SNAP program. Before modernization efforts, SNAP error rates were as high as 9.61 percent (2001-2002). However, when transitioning into modernization initiatives, error rates began to improve (6.16 percent error rate in 2003-2004 and 8.33 percent in 2005-2006). After long-term implementation, error rates have reached record lows, including 3.35 percent error (2006-2007) and 1.08 percent error (2007-2008).
Florida’s successes also include an extensive network of over 3,300 organizations that participate in the Community Partnership Network (CPN). Florida’s CPN was originally created to increase the number of venues where SNAP applicants could go to apply online for SNAP benefits. There are four different levels of community partners: partner, bronze, silver, and gold. Partner level sites are those where paper applications can be picked up. Bronze level sites include capabilities of partner level and access to computers and telephones. Silver level sites provide the services of bronze levels sites and provide access to a printer. The gold level sites provide the same services as silver and provide access to a fax machine. The list of CPN sites includes a variety of service organizations including: hospitals, public schools, food banks, community centers and libraries. ¹⁰
Utah
Utah’s SNAP program uses a bar-coding system as a method to decrease incorrect labeling of documents. When envelopes or documents are mailed to SNAP applicants, they are bar-coded to identify the case file that they should be linked to. If the applicant receiving the documents does not have a case yet, then their documents are partially bar-coded. When documents are returned, a high speed scanner is used to record the barcode and put the documents in the right case file. The partially bar coded documents are manually filed, but the barcode will inform workers which section of the case they should go in. Prior to implementing bar-coding, workers often had difficulty locating the correct documents within a case. Most of the time, the documents were in the correct case, but the documents were labeled incorrectly and were inserted into the wrong section of the case. Bar-coding has dramatically reduced the occurrence of this problem.

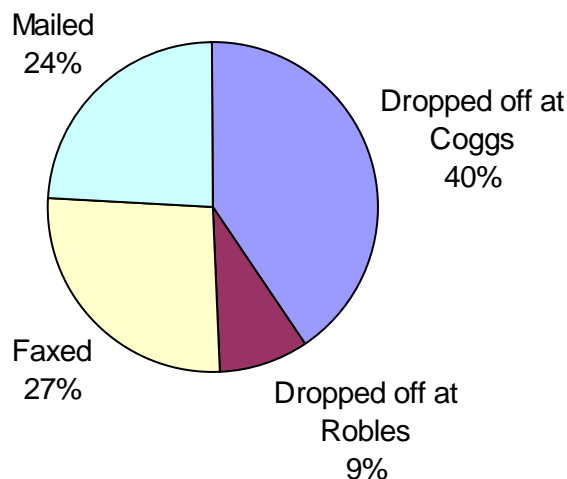
¹⁰ “Modernization of the Food Stamp Program in Florida” report by Scott Cody, Renee Nogales, and Emily Sama Martin

These are the highlights from interviewing states that have used modernization to better their SNAP program administration. Some of the initiatives vary from Milwaukee County's modernization initiatives. However, the programs can be compared and Milwaukee County can learn from the successes and failures of other SNAP programs. The internal workings of the Milwaukee County FoodShare Verification system and other modernization initiatives are detailed below.

MILWAUKEE COUNTY VERIFICATION CENTER

The Verification Center, one of many specialization units within the Coggs Center, is responsible for processing documents that confirm an individual or family's eligibility for a public benefit program. Any verification document that was not processed by an economic support specialist (ESS) worker, during an interview or an annual review, is processed in the Verification Center. Verification documents can be mailed, faxed or dropped off at the Coggs Center or Robles Center for processing. Of the total verification received between October 2007 and September 2008, the majority of verification documents were dropped off at the Coggs Center.

Delivery Methods of Verification Documents in Milwaukee County, 2007-2008



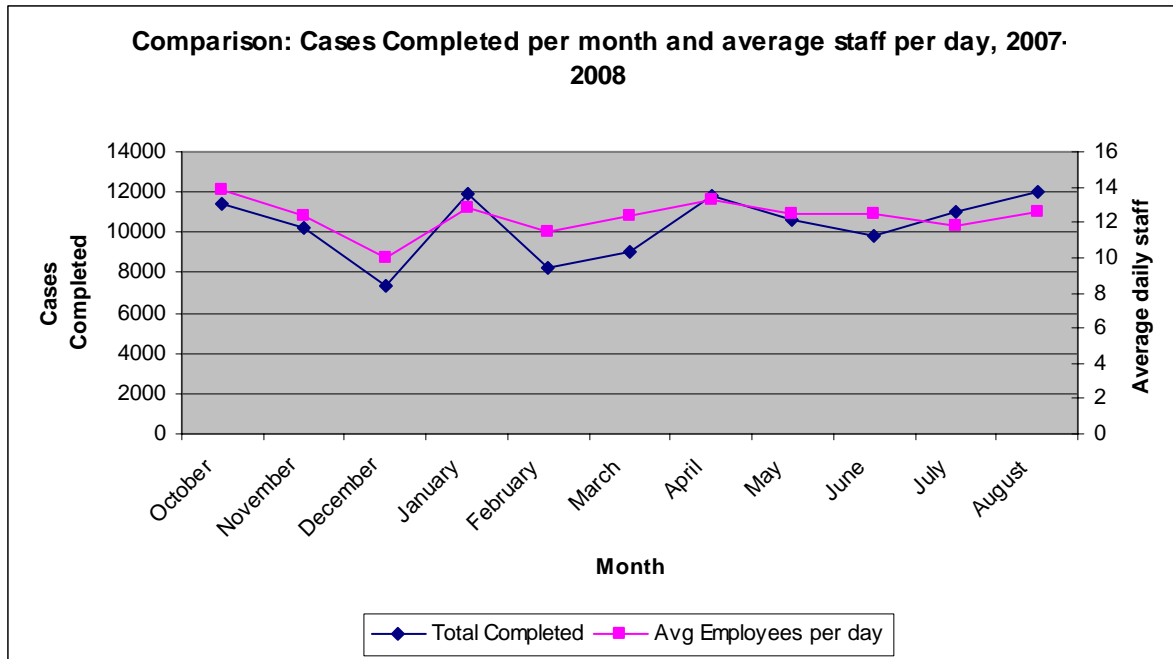
The Verification Center is staffed by clerical workers, ESS workers and quality assurance technicians (QA techs). Clerical workers record documents into logs, organize documents in chronological order and package documents into "bundles" (fifty cases per bundle). Management, after considering the average case completion rate and the overall case load, decided that 50 cases would be a reasonable number of documents for a QA tech or ESS worker to process during an eight hour work period. Supervisors distribute bundles to ESS workers and QA techs each day. ESS workers and QA techs are provided the same training. However ESS workers are typically newer to the agency and do not have as much experience and skill in

processing documents. Therefore, supervisors distribute bundles to workers based on skill level and experience. All current record keeping and distribution of documents is done manually. Due to the volume of cases received each day, cases are hard to keep in orderly piles and often clutter the room where clerical workers bundle cases. The manual processing and ordering of bundles makes the locating of a “lost” document or case a difficult and timely process for supervisors.

Once ESS workers and QA techs receive their bundle, a worker is responsible for processing at least 50 cases during the work day. Each case must be reviewed by the worker, updated into the system and applied to the case status. Processing time and procedures vary drastically for cases, due to the number and different types of documents attached to a case. For example, adding a newborn baby to a household requires little documentation and minimal processing time (approximately 10 minutes). However, intake documents (documents for new applicants to public benefit programs) need to be verified within several databases and can take longer periods of times (approximately an hour). If a worker has unprocessed cases at the end day, the worker is responsible for finishing those cases the next day (in addition to the 50 cases that will be assigned). If workers experience a large backlog of documents, supervisors may allow a worker to spend a day working on backlogged cases, instead of receiving a new bundle.

As of November 2008, five clerical workers, 12 ESS workers, and 15 QA techs were on staff in the Verification Center. However, the number of daily available staff continuously fluctuates due to absentee rates, funding and the number of employee transfers from the Verification Center to other units. Management, supervisors, and staff stated that the Verification Center is constantly understaffed and unable to process the caseload in a timely fashion, due partially to insufficient staffing and high caseloads.

Between October 2007 and September 2008, 167,706 cases were received in the Verification Center. During the same time period, only 127,073 cases (75.8 percent) of the cases were processed by workers. “Backlogging” is the term used to refer to a delay in processing of documents in the Verification Center. An extended period of backlogging is often the result of “churning.” Verification documents must be submitted within a certain period of time (most often a 30 day period after a FoodShare recipient receives notification of a six month review or annual recertification). When documents are not processed before the deadline, the FoodShare recipient who turned in verification documents will no longer receive benefits and may need to reapply for FoodShare. This process is termed “churning” because the same FoodShare recipients are moving in and out of the system, in a cyclical way, due to a backlog that prevents documents from being processed in a timely manner. During most months, the number of verification documents received exceeded the amount of verification processed, due to high caseloads and limited staffing, with the exception of January 2008. The median number of cases received per day in the Verification Center, during the twelve-month period, was 729 cases.



Source: Verification Center monthly Report Cards, October 2007-August 2008.

Between October 2007 and September 2008, Verification Center staffing fluctuated daily between five to 16 workers. A daily average of 13 workers processed data during this period. As shown in the chart above, staffing levels correlated to the number of cases that are completed.

Absenteeism played a significant role in the number of staff available to process data. Verification Center supervisors could not recall a week, in the past few years, where the Verification Center was fully staffed. The county’s absenteeism policy states that no more than 33 percent of workers can be absent during one day. Between the fourth quarter of 2006 and the second quarter of 2008, unexcused absenteeism rates averaged nine percent. Supervisors and managerial staff confirmed that with excused absences (such as vacations, Family Medical Leave Act occurrences, etc.) and unexcused absences, the Verification Center operates with approximately two-thirds of its staff present on any given day.

Worker productivity levels varied between 2006 and 2008. The average verification cases completed per staff member varied from 17 cases to 91 cases. The average cases processed per day was 39 cases. The lowest productivity rate occurred in February, with an average completion rate of 34 cases per worker per day. In contrast, August had the highest productivity rate with an average of 45 cases completed per worker per day. Verification Center target goals state that each worker is to complete 50 cases per day. However at no point between October 2007 and August 2008 did the average document completion rate reach 50 documents per day.

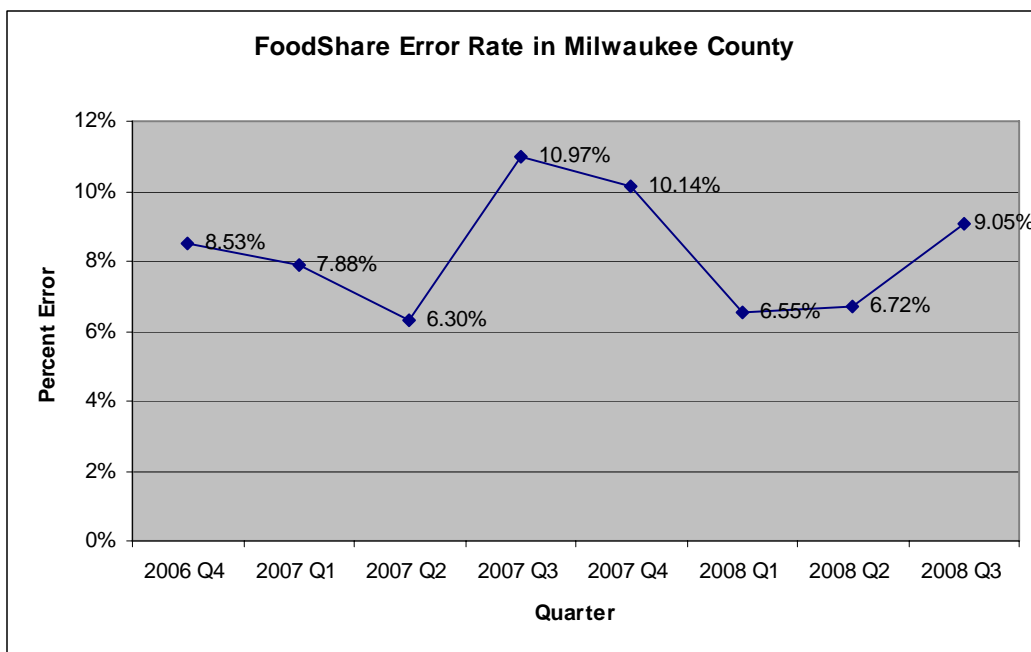
Since August 2008, voluntary overtime projects have been implemented, allowing ESS workers and QA techs to process additional cases. Nine ESS workers, who previously worked in units outside of the Verification Center, were transferred to the Verification Center to help alleviate the backlog. Based on the number of cases received per day and the average case completion rate, 19 workers are needed in the Verification Center to process 100 percent of cases that are

received on a daily basis. There are currently 27 workers employed to process paperwork, due to staffing increases made in August 2008. If the average case completion rates continue at the same level and the caseload volume stays stagnant, the Verification Center should show decreasing backlog periods in 2009. However, FoodShare recipients are at an all-time high in Milwaukee County; therefore, the number of verification documents is expected to increase.

The productivity level of staff is a multi-faceted variable, based on staff morale, types of verification documents being processed, speed of the internet that workers are using, the quality of equipment being used (i.e. computers) and availability of supervisors to help troubleshoot cases. However, data from the Verification Center records and employee interviews confirm a correlation between the number of documents completed and the staff available each day.

Training in the Verification Center comes in three forms: unit meetings, management training and training for front line staff members. On average, seven hours of training were provided per quarter (2.3 hours per month) between the fourth quarter of 2006 and the second quarter of 2008. There were no trends in the number of hours of training received. Training is provided on an “as necessary” basis where training is available or when new policies are enforced. According to DHHS goals, 12 hours of training should be provided to employees during each quarter.

Error rates for Milwaukee County were calculated when 590 random cases were examined by the state and the discrepancy of allocation amounts were calculated. Over a two-year period, an allotment of \$10,305 was misappropriated. Although FoodShare error rates fluctuate throughout the study period, the error rate in Milwaukee County is consistently higher than Wisconsin’s FoodShare error rate, which includes all counties. The average Wisconsin FoodShare error rate (between fourth quarter 2006 and second quarter 2008) was 5.33 percent. During the same time period, Milwaukee County’s error rate was 8.13 percent. This may be attributed Milwaukee County having the largest and most unique county caseload.



Source: Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services available at dhfs.wisconsin.gov

Many Verification Center workers cited a connection between the number of cases received in the Verification Center and the number of calls made to the Call Center. Several QA techs and ESS asserted that as more calls go unanswered in the Call Center, where FoodShare clients call to ask questions about their case, clients have less trust in DHHS staff. As a result, clients will send in Verification Center documents multiple times, hoping that their documents will not be lost in the “faulty” system. Between the first quarter and the third quarter of 2008, 17,309 complaint calls were recorded to the Call Center. The first quarter saw 5,789 calls, 5,457 occurred during the second quarter and 6,063 calls occurred during the third quarter. Of the total calls that were answered, 98.6 percent were related to distribution of benefits, 1.3 percent of calls were related to the treatment of problem cases, and less than one percent were compliments.

Results of Interviews with County Verification Center Staff on Modernization Initiatives

	DHHS Job Description	Findings
Staffing	Management Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 3 of 4 managers agree that high staff absentee rates increase backlog in the Verification Center ▪ All acknowledge the need for more staff (up to 10 more workers) in the Verification Center
	Verification Center Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 of 2 supervisors recommend an increase in trainings for workers. ▪ Both recommend increasing staffing to 25 ESS and QA techs, in the Verification Center, to prevent backlogging
	Verification Center Workers*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 7 of 11 workers believe the current Verification Center staff is not sufficient to meet the caseload.
	DHHS Job Description	Findings
Productivity	Management Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Half of the managers believe that the 50 cases per day quota is a reasonable expectation for Verification Center workers ▪ All managers believe that low morale contributes to low productivity levels
	Verification Center Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2 of 2 supervisors stated that workers do not always complete the 50 case quota because of varied difficulty and number of documents ▪ 1 of 2 supervisors said the H-MAC monitoring system would be very helpful in viewing worker productivity; however, there is not enough time in a manager’s schedule to use the system.
	Verification Center Workers*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 7 of 11 workers do not think that the 50 case per day quota is a reasonable expectation to place on Verification Center workers, due to the unpredictable number of documents that come with each case and the difficulty in processing different documents.

*Clerical workers, QA techs and ESS workers

Policy/Procedure	DHHS Job Description	Findings
	Management Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All managers acknowledge the single caseload system was initiated because of an increased caseload and its ability to monitor case activity
	Verification Center Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Both supervisors prefer the individual caseload to the single case load model ▪ Both supervisors felt management cannot identify with the work employees do in the Verification Center and are “out of touch” with the implementation of policy
	Verification Center Workers*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 8 of 11 workers would like to receive more training on the policies and procedures within the Verification Center.
Technology	DHHS Job Description	Findings
	Management Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All managers acknowledge that the Verification Center is currently “paper-driven”
	Verification Center Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 of 2 supervisors welcome document imaging in the Verification Center, as a tool of efficiency ▪ Both supervisors are concerned that the inbox system may clog worker’s emails and make it difficult for supervisors to reassign cases
	Verification Center Workers*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5 of 11 workers welcome the new technology that will be implemented into the Verification Center (e.g. electronic case file) ▪ 5 of 11 workers are unaware of any upcoming changes to the technology used in the Verification Center
Recommended Changes	DHHS Job Description	Findings
	Management Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All managers recommended focusing on the implementation of the document imaging and the inbox system as a way to generate measurable productivity statistics and increase efficiency
	Verification Center Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 of 2 supervisors recommended increasing equipment in the Verification Center (i.e. fax machine, copy machines, etc.) in order for processing of documents to continue when a machine malfunctions ▪ 1 of 2 supervisors recommended decreasing the number of workers that “touch” a case so that workers feel a greater sense of accountability for cases that they process.
	Verification Center Workers*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two workers recommended that increased supervisors should be added to the Verification Center to help troubleshoot problems.

*Clerical workers, QA techs and ESS workers

The DHHS Verification Center currently utilizes document scanning to archive documents that have been processed. One clerical worker is dedicated to scanning documents “in-house” at the Verification Center. However, the majority of verification documents are scanned into electronic records by the SMI Scanning Company. DHHS also has an interactive voice response (IVR) system that allows for customers who have registered their cases to access information about their cases via the telephone. The IVR system can be used 24 hours a day, seven days a week. However the best time to use the system is during the evenings when more phone lines are available to connect calls.

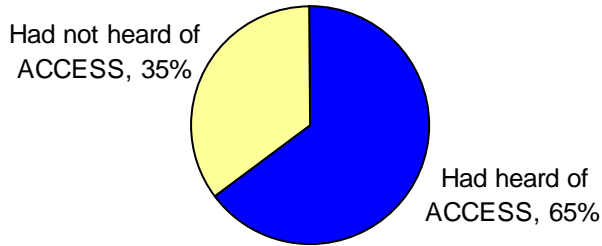
Several projects are in the planning stages for the Verification Center in order to improve efficiency of processing and to increase accessibility of case information to clients. In 2009, the Verification Center is expected to complete the electronic case file system that will allow all verification documents to be scanned immediately once they are received in the Verification Center. Once scanned, documents can be processed electronically, with ESS and QA techs viewing documents electronically and filing them electronically. The “inbox” system is another project that will allow for verification “bundles” to be assigned electronically, instead of being distributed manually. The inbox system will produce statistics on the Verification Center (e.g. the number of documents entering the Verification Center, the types of documents entering the Verification Center, and the speed at which workers can process different types of documents).

ACCESS IN THE COGGS CENTER

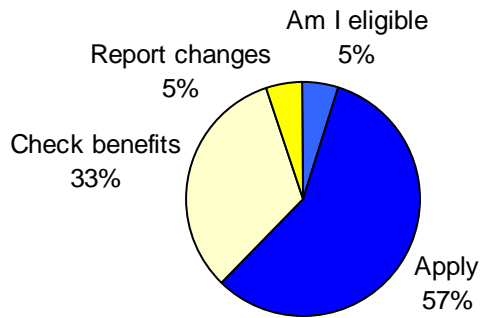
In an attempt to make online FoodShare resources available to the hundreds of customers who enter the Coggs Center each day, four computers are available exclusively for ACCESS website users. A Hunger Task Force employee recorded observations of 51 FoodShare clients using the ACCESS website at the Coggs Center. After finishing a computer session, the clients were asked to answer questions about their experience using the website and the effect it had on their knowledge of their FoodShare case. (Questionnaires that were used to evaluate computer literacy, demographic information, and functions used on ACCESS are available in Appendix G.)

The majority of the 51 clients spoke English as a first language, making communication a non-issue in observations and gaining information from clients. Currently all features of the ACCESS website are available in English. The majority of clients were computer literate, showed comfort using a computer and were able to maneuver the website with little or no assistance.

Knowledge of ACCESS



ACCESS Functions Used



While the majority of clients used the computers to apply for benefits, nearly 40 percent used ACCESS to check their benefits. Less than a quarter of the clients observed used the website to check their eligibility for public benefit programs or to report changes. This may be attributed to the fact that most clients were unaware that changes can be reported online and many clients were confident that they knew which programs they were and were not eligible for.

Two-thirds of clients did not have previous knowledge of ACCESS and four out of five clients had never used the ACCESS website before. Despite the lack of clients who have heard of or used the ACCESS website, more than three-quarters of clients were able to accomplish everything they intended to complete by visiting the Cogs Center by using the ACCESS website. Clients who were able to accomplish all of the tasks that they intended were often those who wanted to check the status of their case or determine why they were not receiving benefits. The ACCESS website allows clients to view the start date and end date of benefits, the amount of FoodShare benefits they should be receiving and the reasons why benefits were denied or discontinued. The ACCESS website proved useful to clients when reapplying for FoodShare benefits because their FoodShare case was closed, confirming the amount of benefits a client should or should not be receiving, the day benefits will be issued and reasons why an applicant is not eligible for FoodShare.

Observations in the Cogs Center demonstrated that the ACCESS website is a tool that can and should be used by the current FoodShare recipients to manage their case and apply for FoodShare. The website proves effective for most and helps customers come to the Cogs Center with a more informed sense of their case status. The Community Partnership is one method of educating a large population of current FoodShare clients and potential FoodShare recipients about the usefulness of the ACCESS website.

MILWAUKEE COUNTY'S COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Hunger Task Force recruited pantries from its emergency food network for the Community Partnership program in order to examine the recruitment process of community partners. Of the 16 pantries contacted, 13 pantries demonstrated interest in the program. Each interested site was given an information packet about the partnership and was visited by a Hunger Task Force

representative. Between September 24 and November 3, 2008, 13 pantries were recruited for the DHHS Community Partnership Program. Food pantries are often the first place people look for help when they are unable to afford enough food. Therefore food pantries are excellent candidates for the community partnership because they are able to disseminate information to potential and current FoodShare recipients.

As a result of recruitment, nine pantries from Hunger Task Force's network were enrolled into the program at the time of this report. The four pantries that were not enrolled in the community partnership opted to join the program at a later date when they felt more capable of meeting the volunteer and time requirements. Follow up conversations took place in December 2008.

Recruitment into the Community Partnership program is usually performed by the county community liaison or an outside recruitment agency. However, in order to fully understand the barriers and challenges that may occur during the recruitment process, Hunger Task Force staff performed recruitment on behalf of the Milwaukee Community Partnership Program. Recommended pantries were contacted via phone, initially, to set up a face-to-face conversation. To understand the characteristics of the pantry's clientele, the Hunger Task Force staff member asked questions about the services the pantry currently provides and the number of volunteers who assist during the pantry's open hours.

After explaining the objectives of the community partnership and the different levels of commitment, Hunger Task Force worked with the pantry coordinators and volunteers to determine the membership level that would best suit the pantry's services and capabilities (considering access to computers, space and number of volunteers). Pantries that were originally reluctant to join the partnership were pantries that had misconceptions that the FoodShare program would be more trouble than was worth the benefits. Pantry coordinators that served an elderly population were also hesitant to join the partnership because they felt it would be difficult to teach senior citizens how to use ACCESS. Pantry coordinators who were immediately interested in the program were interested in the free educational material and the trainings that community liaisons provided.

After pantries gave a verbal commitment to join the program, Hunger Task Force staff forwarded the contact information to the Community Partnership's county community liaison. Shortly thereafter, Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) were sent out to interested pantries and were returned. Pantries were not eligible to receive free materials until the MOUs were received and processed by the county. Educational materials were sent via mail to pantries that requested it.

Although the recruitment period began in November, the first county training program for new partners took place in December 2008. Only one pantry coordinator was able to attend the training. The training provided information on benefit programs that can be applied for through the ACCESS website. Although several coordinators were interested, due to the time and place of the training meeting, four interested pantry coordinators and volunteers were unable to come to the meeting. Although pantry coordinators had feedback on how joining the Community Partnership had or had not improved their outreach efforts, pantry coordinators did not have the contact information for community liaisons. As a result of lack of contact information, questions and comments were channeled through the Hunger Task Force staff and were later conveyed to

the community liaison. In January 2009, Hunger Task Force staff relayed all contact information to the community liaison in order to integrate recruited pantries into the full supervision of the Community Partnership program. The following findings were found during the recruitment process:

Strengths of Community Partner Recruitment

- The Community Partnership provides different levels of commitment for participating organizations. The variety of levels allows for any pantry to find a level that matches its capabilities (limited by staffing, technology, and client population).
- The Community Partnership provides no financial commitments, on the part of partners, because promotional and educational information about the ACCESS website is provided for free.
- The community liaison is available as a resource on FoodShare and medical assistance programs, ACCESS website questions and troubleshooting individual problem cases.
- Food pantries are familiar with Hunger Task Force staff; therefore, they are willing to consider joining programs that Hunger Task Force endorses.

Weaknesses of Community Partner Recruitment

- Correspondence between Hunger Task Force's recruiter and food pantries did not resemble the relationships between DHHS' community liaisons; therefore, pantries may become reliant on Hunger Task Force staff for additional services that DHHS representatives should be providing.
- The DHHS Community Partnership does not have a full-time staff person who can serve as the community liaison, devoting large amounts of his/her time to developing relationship with partners, answering questions, providing educational support and trainings, and managing the logistics of the program.
- The Memoranda of Understandings (MOU) take a long time to be sent to potential partners and processed by the County. Community Partners cannot receive free education materials until the MOUs are completed and processed. The length of processing MOUs may deter some partners from entering the program.
- Once pantries are recruited into the Community Partnership, it is difficult for community liaisons to understand and meet the needs of all partners because they serve a variety of different populations, in a variety of different ways (i.e. elderly, disabled, homeless, etc.). The inability of the community liaisons to understand community partners' client bases may lead community partners to feel devalued and to lose interest in the Community Partnership as a whole.
- The typical time commitment and schedules of the typical food pantry coordinator (part-time volunteer with a full-time job) does not allow him or her to take advantage of Community Partnership trainings, which typically take place during the work day.
- The ordering process of free ACCESS website educational materials is complicated and lengthy, discouraging partners from ordering additional materials and extending the amount of time that community partners do not have education materials to provide to their clients.

Overall, the recruitment of 11 community partners into the DHHS Community Partnership program was successful. However, the results of the recruitment process within the Hunger Task

Force network do not reflect the program's ability to successfully maintain and support community partners that are recruited by community liaisons. The DHHS Community Partnership program is an important aspect of Milwaukee County's overall modernization plan because the program encourages people to utilize the ACCESS website when managing a case. As a result of more ACCESS website use, there will be less people who come to the Coggs Center and Robles Center daily to inquire about their cases, allowing County workers to spend more time processing verification documents and performing interviews.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Program managers should consult other states to learn about modernization initiative best practices.
2. Program managers should provide monthly trainings to Verification Center workers.
3. Program managers should recruit, train and support community partners to maximize ACCESS website usage.
4. Program managers should review existing FoodShare statutes to determine which verification documents can be deleted.
5. Community-based organizations, such as Hunger Task Force, should require their network members to join the Community Partnership Network.
6. Program managers should continue to work with community-based organizations, like Hunger Task Force, to support ACCESS education and evaluation projects.

VI. REFERENCES

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Interview with Verification Center Supervisors (October 29, 2008).

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APPENDIX A

Modernization Matrix: Glossary		Policy		Call Center				Enhanced Technology										Outsourcing					
		Unique/Demo Waivers (Area Covered)	Approved Waiver of Face-to-Face Interview App Recert	Statewide	Regional	Interviews	Change	Status	ARU/AVR	Application	E-Signature	Changes	Case Status	Auto Interv	Document	Imaging	Virtual Training	Auto Case Reading System	Other	Elig System (Data Staging New System?)	Who? Contractor &/or Community Partner	Core Program Functions/ Services Provided	
MMWRO																							
State, County or Locality	List any demos that have SNMP implications, and have a potentially large impact on SNMP.	Yes/No (Not hardship)	Yes/No (Not hardship)	Yes/No: Is there a statewide center?	Yes/No: Is there a regional center?	Yes/No: Are interviews conducted by a call center?	Yes/No: Can customer report center?	Yes/No: Can customer call center?	Yes/No: Can client report status online?	Yes/No: Can client check status online?	Yes/No: Can client schedule interviews?	Yes/No: Does the area store all state project files (e.g. doc's, spreadsheets, etc.)? If so, what is extent?	Yes/No: Does state project area conduct web or computer?	Yes/No: Does state project area conduct including sampling?	Does the state project area utilize any other advanced technology? If so, specify.	Does the state project area conduct case reading/ superv. Review process including sampling?	Does the state project area conduct web or computer?	Does the state project area conduct case reading/ superv. Review process including sampling?	Does the state project area utilize any other advanced technology? If so, specify.	What's the name of the new system? How old is it? Is the State looking for a new contractor, list names of any.	If any SNMP-related services are performed by the contractor, list names of any.	What SNMP-related functions do they perform? (list functional outreach?)	
	Please Note: Shaded/gray areas indicate the project is in implementation steps.																						

Modernization Matrix: Western

State, County or Locality	Policy			Call Center							Enhanced Technology							Elig System		Outsourcing	
	Unique/Demo Waivers (Area Covered)	Approved Waiver of Face-to-Face Interview		Client Telephone Services							Online Services							Other	Who? Contractor &/or Community Partner	Core Program Functions/ Services Provided	
		App	Recert	Statewide	Regional	Interviews	Change	Status	ARU/AVR	Application	E-Signature	Changes	Case Status	Auto Interv	Scheduling	Document Imaging	Virtual Training				Auto Case Reading System
Alaska	None	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Fee Agents as permitted by 7 CFR 272.76	Eligibility interviews and secure required verification	
Arizona	AZ SNAP - Combined Application Project	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Arizona Community Action	Outreach Activities		
California	Work Advancement Support Center Demo Project in San Diego, CA	Yes	Yes	No	10 counties	No	some counties	some counties	4 counties	4 counties	No	No	Yes; some counties	Yes; some counties	No	No	No	CA Association of Food Banks and several FCBO's too many to list	20 LA CEOs accept SNAP applications		
Guam	None	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Norona	none		
Hawaii		No	Yes, but not implemented	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	None		
Idaho		No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	contractor	E&T SNAP NE		
Nevada	Negotiating Interview Demo Waiver	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Food Bank of N. Nevada and H.E.L.P of S. Nevada	Outreach Activities		
Oregon			Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	limited comm partner	application filing and data gathering-pilot		
Washington		No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Region 1	The contractors listed perform a variety of basic outreach services.		

Modernization Matrix: Mid-Atlantic

State, County or Locality	Policy			Call Center						Enhanced Technology										Elig System		Outsourcing	
	Unique/Demo Waivers (Area Covered)	Waiver of Face-to-Face Interview		Client Telephone Services						Online Services										Dir/Seeking New System?	Who? Contractor &/or Community Partner	Core Program Functions/ Services Provided	
		App	Recert	Statewide	Regional	Interviews	Change	Status	ARU/AVR	Application	E-Signature	Changes	Case Status	Auto Interv	Scheduling	Document Imaging	Virtual Training	Auto Case Reading System	Other				
Delaware	None	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	DCS II	ME Reviews			
DC	None	Yes as of 10/1/2008	Yes as of 10/1/2008	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	ACEDS 1992				
Maryland	None	No	No	No	Some Locals	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	CARES 1993	Some Conim. Based Orgs - Un. Way of Central MD is primary			
New Jersey	SSI/CAP			No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	FAMIS 1985 - seeking new system	None	Assist with completion of online applications.		
Pennsylvania	SSI/CAP	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	CIS In 1991	Falth Based Orgs	Assist with completion of apps		
Virginia	SSI/CAP	No	No	No	Some Locals										Some Locals	Yes			ADAPT 1995				
Virgin Islands	None	No	No	No	No								No	No	No	No	No	No	CARBS	Voluntary community partners			
West Virginia	SSI/CAP	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	RAPIDS 1995	completing online app			

Modernization Matrix: Midwest																							
State, County or Locality	Policy				Call Center				Enhanced Technology						Elig System		Outsourcing						
	Unique/Demo Waivers (Area Covered)	Approved Waiver to Face-to-Face Interview	App	Recert	Statewide	Regional	Interviews	Change	Status	ARU/AVR	Application	E-Signature	Changes	Case Status	Auto Interv	Scheduling	Document	Imaging	Virtual Training	Auto Case Reading System	Other	Who? Contractor &/or Community Partner	Core Program Functions/ Services Provided
Illinois	Express Stamps (food pantries screen & system auto issues expedited benefits if eligible.)	Phone Recert Interview via IVR	Yes at Food Banks	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes - Phone Stamps for Recerts	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	IPACS (60) AIS (63) ACH (69)	Yes. Northern Illinois Food Banks.	Interview and assist w/ on-line app. If elig, client receives 1-month of SNAP.
Indiana	None	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, 5 of 8 regions complete	Yes, 5 of 8 regions complete	Yes, 5 of 8 regions complete	Yes, 5 of 8 regions complete	Yes, 5 of 8 regions complete	Yes, 5 of 8 regions complete	Yes, 5 of 8 regions complete	Yes, 5 of 8 regions complete	Yes, 5 of 8 regions complete	Yes, 5 of 8 regions complete	No	No	Yes, 5 of 8 regions complete	Yes, 5 of 8 regions complete	Yes	No	Indiana Client Eligibility System (ICES) - 1992	IBM coalition	Data Gathering & Automated Wrap Around Support
Michigan	MICAPE and CAP (not implemented yet)	No	No	No	Yes Detroit	No	Yes, Detroit	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes - AFFC/Automatic Print and PS)	No	No	Yes	Bridges in pilot, CHHS old system	MICAPE/Michigan ElderLaw	Outreach for elderly population
Minnesota	None	No	No	No	Yes some counties	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes (some counties)	Yes (some counties)	Yes	No	MAXUS1990/No	Chimed & Sennac Comm. Act. Agencies - 8 counties in SE MN.	Simplify apps for all CAA clients by screening and app. assi.
Ohio	None	No	Yes	No	Yes, several counties	No	Yes, several counties	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes (some counties)	No	No	No	Yes (some counties)	Yes (some counties)	No	No	Crts-E 1992/No	Ohio Benefit Bank	Application submission
Wisconsin	CAP - Not implemented yet	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes, several counties	Yes, several counties	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	CARES/No	No	No

Modernization Matrix: Mountain Plains																							
State, County or Locality	Policy			Call Center					Enhanced Technology					Elig System		Outsourcing							
	Unique/Demo Waivers (Area Covered)	Approved Waiver of Face-to-Face Interview		Client Telephone Services					Online Services					Date/Seeking New System?	Who?	Core Program Functions/ Services/ Provided							
		App	Recert	Statewide	Regional	Interviews	Change	Status	ARU/AVR	Application	E-Signature	Case Status	Auto Interv	Scheduling	Document	Virtual Training	Auto Case Reading System	Other					
Colorado	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	4 counties	No	No	No	CBMS 9/2004 EDS	No	No		
Iowa	No	No	No	Yes (2)	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	IABC-8/1989	No	No		
Kansas	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	KACESES-1989	No	No		
Missouri	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	FAMIS-1999	No	No		
Montana	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	TEAMS-1999	No	No		
Nebraska	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	NI-FOCUS-1998	NWD-DOL & Arbor Education & Training	No	No	
N Dakota	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	TECS-1994	No	No	No	
S Dakota	Standard Med. Deduct. Waiver CAP/SSI	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	ACCESS-1986	No	No	No	No
Utah	CAP/SSI, Telephone Interview/waiver	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	E-Find- consolidated database Wait time monitoring; App tracking sys under	PACMIS (E-REP- May, 2009)	Senior Centers and Community Action groups	Completion & submission of app. To call centers		
Wyoming	Standard Med. Deduct. Waiver	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	development	No	No	No	No

Modernization Matrix: Northeast

State, County or Locality	Policy			Call Center					Enhanced Technology										Elig System		Outsourcing
	Unique/Demo Waivers (Area Covered)	Waiver of Face-to-Face Interview		Client Telephone Services					Online Services										Date/Seeking New System?	Who? Contractor &/or Community Partner	Core Program Functions/ Services Provided
		App	Recert	Statewide	Regional	Interviews	Change	Status	ARU/AVR	Application	E-Signature	Changes	Case Status	Auto Interv	Document Imaging	Virtual Training	Auto Case Reading System	Other			
Connecticut		No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Planning	Planning	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	EMS changes planned	University of Connecticut	Nutrition Education	
Maine	No REC for cases with returned mail	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	ACES changes planned	Cooperative Extension	Nutrition Education	
Massachusetts	Standard Medical Deductions	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Planning	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Planning	Planning	No	No	BEACON Changes planned for end of year	Public Consulting Group	Look at business practices	
New Hampshire		No	No	No	No	No	No	Planning	Planning	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	New Heights changes planned	University of New Hampshire	Nutrition Education	
New York	Working Families Initiative expansion of care policy	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Planning	Planning	Planning	Yes	Yes	No	No	Planning statewide WMS	Nutrition Consortium and the NOEPs	Facilitated enrollment select counties through CBOS and NOEPs	
NYC	Requesting waiver to recertify through an MRS	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Planning	Planning	Planning	Planning	Planning	No	Yes	No	No	No	Planning statewide WMS	Food Bank of NYC	Facilitated enrollment	
Onondaga County NY		Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Planning	No	No	No	No	Planning	No	No	No	Planning statewide WMS			
Rhode Island		No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	InRhodes changes planned	University of Rhode Island	Nutrition Education	
Vermont		Yes	Yes	Planning	Planning	Planning	Planning	Planning	Planning	Planning	Planning	Planning	Planning	Planning	Yes	No	No	ACCESS Changes planned in 3-5 years	VT Campaign to end childhood hunger	Nutrition Education	

Modernization Matrix: Southeast																	
State, County or Locality	Policy				Call Center				Enhanced Technology					Elig System	Outsourcing		
	Unique/Demo Waivers (Area Covered)	Approved Waiver of Face-to-Face Interview		Status	Change	Interviews	Regional	Statewide	Online Services					Date/Starting New System?	Who? Contractor &/or Community Partner	Core Program Functions/ Services Provided	
	App	Recent	AR/AVR						Application	E-Signature	Changes	Case Status	Auto Interv				Scheduling
Alabama	Simplified Elderly App Demo (statewide)	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Other	FACETS: 1991 SCHIE: 1982	No	N/A
Florida	Simplified Elderly App Demo and SUNCAP (statewide)	Yes (2 districts)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes (3)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	FLORIDA: 2004	ACCESS Network (approx. 3,200 partners)	Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum-level partners.
Georgia	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes (2)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	CRS/SUCCESS: 1997	No	N/A
Kentucky	Simplified Assistance for Elderly (statewide)	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	KAMES: 1984	No	N/A
Mississippi	Yes, MSCAP (statewide)	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	MAVERICS 1998	No	N/A
N Carolina	Simplified Assistance for Elderly (statewide)	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	ESIS: 1984 NCFAST: Procuring developer	No	N/A
S Carolina	SCCAP & Simp Elderly App Demo (statewide)	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Client History Information Profile (CHIP): 1998 Vision Integration Platform (VIP): In development	No	N/A
Tennessee	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes (4)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No		No	N/A

Modernization Matrix: Southwest

State, County or Locality	Policy			Call Center				Enhanced Technology							Elig System		Outsourcing	
	Unique/Demo Waivers (Area Covered)	Approved Waiver of Face-to-Face Interview		Statewide	Regional	Interviews	Change	Status	Online Services				Virtual Training	Auto Case Reading System	Other	Who?	Core Program Functions/ Services/ Provided	
		App	Recert						Application	E-Signature	Changes	Case Status						Auto Interv
Arkansas	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes, pilot	No	No	ANSWER, 2003, No	Benefit Bank, Seven County Pilot	Aids applicants in completing apps & utilizes pre-screening prog.
Louisiana	Combined Application Project (statewide)	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Pilot parish only	No	Planning	No	LAMI (1994) Enterprise Sys in Planning	Kingsley House in New Orleans only (comm. partner)	Outreach Program
New Mexico	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	ISD2, 26+ yrs. old Currently seeking new system	NM State Univ, Esim Area Workforce Development Board, Comm. on Status of Women	E & T Services
Oklahoma	None	No	Yes	No	Yes, OK City area.	No	Yes	10/1/2008	No	Yes, but app not processed online.	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	State has not finalized contractor, in Request for Proposals process.	FSP Eligibility and other programs will be covered.
Texas	36 Month Certs for SSI Hits and Simplified Medical Deduction	No	Yes	Limited to four pilot counties	No	No	Yes	No limited to 4 pilot counties	Yes	In 4 pilot counties area	No	Yes in 4 pilot counties	Yes	No	No	Pilot in 4 counties Limited rollout in October 2008	Deloitte	Aids applicants in completing apps & utilizes pre-screening program

APPENDIX B

MILWAUKEE COUNTY MANAGEMENT INTERVIEW

PROCESS

1. Please describe and provide a brief history of the Milwaukee County single caseload model.
2. What is the role of the Verification Center in the single caseload and how does this differ from the former individual caseload system. What is difference between single and individual caseload models?
3. What are the strengths of your current verification model? What are the weaknesses?
4. Describe the current verification process.
5. Are there any plans to change this process?
6. What technology is used in the verification process?
7. Are there plans for adding additional technology?
8. How does the current verification model affect the entire application process?
9. How does the verification center interact with other departments in terms of the eligibility process? How does its process affect other areas? How do other areas affect verification? If the verification center gets backlogged, how does that affect the rest of the process to complete an application?

STAFFING

10. What is the verification staffing pattern? How many staff / percent out sick / unexcused absence rate, etc.
11. Is this staffing pattern sufficient for the current workload?
12. How is the verification workforce monitored?
13. Does this monitoring system work? How could it be improved?

CHANGE

14. If cost were not an issue, what specific changes do you feel are needed in the verification center to make it function more efficiently in terms of:
 - a. Staff?
 - b. Technology?
 - a. Systems/processes? (CARES)
15. What resources would be required to make these changes?
16. To what extent are these resources available. What are the ways these changes could happen?

APPENDIX C

MILWAUKEE COUNTY VERIFICATION CENTER SUPERVISOR INTERVIEW

PROCESS

1. Please describe the current verification process. What documents are processed, how is this done, by whom, how long does it take to process a case, etc.?
2. What is your role as a verification supervisor?
3. Describe a normal day – what tasks do you do? What are ESS workers tasks?
4. Who/what area confirms cases?
5. How does a client submit verification documents to your agency? (i.e. mail, FAX, email, drop-off, etc.)
6. Is there any documentation that needs to be completed when documents come to the building that identifies the document type, dates the documents entered the system, who received them, etc. Is the client given a receipt for the documents? How do you track verification documents from the time they enter your agency until they are filed?
7. Do you ever have a situation where document verification becomes backlogged? If so, how far behind do you sometimes get? How do you get caught up?
8. What is the relationship of document verification to other eligibility functions? How do they affect each other? How well do they work together?
9. Approximately how many cases/documents do you process in a weeks time?

STAFFING

10. How many staff do you have for document verification? How many out sick on average, unexcused absence rate, etc.? What are their general attitudes toward their work?
11. How do you monitor workers' performance? How do you reward/discipline?
12. How are they trained? What type of ongoing training do you offer?
13. What additional training or tools would help you manage your workforce?

14. What could management do differently to make the verification center run better and to assist you and your workers?

CHANGE

15. If cost were not an issue, what specific changes do you feel are needed in the verification center to make it function more efficiently in terms of:

- a. Staff?
- b. Technology?
- c. Systems/processes? (CARES)

16. Are there things that could be done to help the workers do a better job?

17. If the County goes to a system of up-front scanning so you are only working from scanned documents are there things that can be done to make this work well?

APPENDIX D

MILWAUKEE COUNTY VERIFICATION CENTER WORKER INTERVIEW

PROCESS

1. Describe a normal day as a Q.A. Tech in the verification center. What tasks do you do?
2. Walk me through what needs to be done when you process a case from the time the verification gets dropped off or faxed in. What are the steps you take? How long does it take? What verification documents do you require?
3. How does a client submit verification documents to your agency? (i.e. mail, FAX, email, drop-off, etc.)
4. Is there any documentation that needs to be completed when documents come to the building that identifies the document type, dates the documents entered the system, who received them, etc.
5. Is the client given a receipt for the documents?
6. How do you track verification documents from the time they enter your agency until they are filed?
7. How does the verification center interact with other departments in terms of the eligibility process? How does its process affect other areas? How do other areas affect verification? If the verification center gets backlogged, how does that affect the rest of the process to complete an application?
8. Do you ever have a situation where document verification becomes backlogged? If so, how far behind do you sometimes get? How do you get caught up?

WORK ENVIRONMENT

9. What is the most frustrating thing about your job?
10. What training, mentoring or other assistance is currently given to you to help you with your job? What tools or training do you wish you had in order to work efficiently?
11. What could your supervisors/managers do differently to assist the verification center run better and to help you on your job?

CHANGE

12. If you could make changes in the verification center, how would you make it function more efficiently in terms of:
 - a. Staff?
 - b. Technology?
 - c. Systems/processes? (CARES)

13. If the County goes to a system of up-front scanning so you are only working from scanned documents are there things that can be done to make this work well?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW WITH (NON-WISCONSIN) STATE SNAP PROGRAMS

PROCESS

1. Please provide a brief overview of the way that a SNAP case is processed by your agency.
2. What verification documents do you require?
3. How can a client get verification documents to your agency? (i.e. mail, FAX, email, drop-off, etc.)
4. Do you require any documentation to be completed when documents come to the building that identifies the document type, dates the documents entered the system, who received them, etc.
5. Is the client given a receipt for the documents?
6. How are verification documents processed? What are the steps, who completes them, how long does it take?
7. Do you make use of an electronic case file (ECF) or do you operate with a paper file system?
8. If you have an Electronic Case File:
 - a. How are documents processed?
 - b. What type of scanning equipment do you have? What are the capabilities of this equipment?
 - c. How are documents coded?
 - d. How are documents assigned to workers?
 - e. Do you scan documents up-front or after a case is processed and confirmed?
 - f. How are documents placed in the file when processing is completed?
 - g. Who can access documents from your ECF?
9. Do you have a tracking mechanism to know where verification documents are from the time they enter your agency until they are filed?
10. Do you receive inquiries from clients or advocates regarding the status of verification documents? What is the volume and frequency of these requests? How are these requests received (phone, email, in person, etc.)? How are they processed? Do requests

from some groups or individuals get processed differently (i.e. Elected officials, advocates)

11. Do you ever have a situation where document verification becomes backlogged? If so, how far behind do you sometimes get? How do you get caught up?
12. What is the relationship of document verification to other eligibility functions? How do they affect each other? How well do they work together?
13. Approximately how many cases/documents do you process in a weeks time?

WORK ENVIRONMENT

14. How many staff do you have for document verification?
15. What are their tasks – i.e. how do they do their job?
16. Do they confirm cases?
17. How are they trained? Is training ongoing?
18. How much are they paid and what benefits do they receive?
19. What technology do you supply them with?
20. How are they monitored?

CHANGE

21. If cost were not an issue, what specific changes do you feel are needed in the verification center to make it function more efficiently in terms of:
 - a. Staff?
 - b. Technology?
 - c. Systems/processes?

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW WITH (NON-WISCONSIN) ADVOCACY PROGRAMS

1. What has been your experience working with the state or county SNAP (SNAP) administration offices?
2. What are some of the strengths of the current modernization efforts (online applications, phone interviews, case status websites, electronic case filing, etc.) that have made it easier for clients to apply for benefits and maintain their benefits?
3. What barriers have clients experienced as a result of modernization of the SNAP program in your state or county?
4. What are your organizations biggest concerns, regarding your state or county's SNAP program?

APPENDIX G

**ACCESS Use- Coggs Center
Observation Sheet**

Age:

- Less than 18
 18-24
 25-39
 40-54
 55-64
 65 or older

Language customer reads/speaks?

- English
 Spanish
 Other: - _____

What feature(s) on ACCESS did the customer use?

- Am I Eligible?
 Apply for Benefits
 Check My Benefits
 Report My Changes

Measure of customer's computer literacy:

- Cannot turn on computer or maneuver mouse
 Slow use of computer and is confused by format of ACCESS webpage
 Slow use of computer, but can understand instructions on ACCESS webpage
 Ease with computer functions and quick use of pages

Amount of help customer needed:

- No help
 Customer had minimal Questions
 Customer had many questions
 Volunteer assisted customer majority of time

	YES	NO	NOTES:
Did the customer previously know about ACCESS and its functions?			
Was this the customers first time using ACCESS?			
Did the customer accomplish what they hoped to complete by coming into Coggs, by using ACCESS?			
Does the customer have any type of disability that made using ACCESS difficult (physical, visual, language, literacy, etc)?			

Was there anything that the customer wanted to do through ACCESS, but wasn't able to do? If so, what?			
Were there any technical problems using ACCESS?			
Did the customer need to seek further services at the Coggs Center after using the ACCESS program?			
Does the customer plan on using ACCESS in the future?			
	YES	NO	NOTES
Do you have an email account?			
Would you prefer to be contacted about your account via email?			

APPENDIX H

Community Partner Checklist

Location: _____

Site Coordinator: _____

Person you talked with:

Contact Phone Number: _____

	YES	NO	NOTES:
Does the coordinator seem receptive to the Milwaukee County Community Partnership program?			
Does the site have enough staff/volunteers to actively assist clients (with computer/fax/application)?			
Does there appear to be interest in receiving general training/knowledge of the FoodShare application process?			
Does the location have the ability to distribute Milwaukee County promotional items and brochures?			
Does the location have the ability to offer telephone access to clients?			
Does the location have the ability to offer fax access to clients?			
Does the location have the ability to offer computer access for clients?			
Can the location provide internet access to the computer?			
Do the site coordinator and volunteers have an interest in gaining more ACCESS knowledge (technical assistance and the application process) so they can better assist clients?			
Community Partner Level Recommendation: _____			

APPENDIX I

DHHS Community Partnership Sites (as of November 2008):

ANEW Health Care Services
Automated Health Systems
Center for Deaf & Hard of Hearing
Children's Community Health Plan
Church of Good Hope
Community Advocates
Community Baptist Church
Fighting Back, Inc.
Florist Avenue Lutheran Community Food Pantry
Froedtert Hospital
Good Samaritan Outreach Ctr.
Goodwill Industries
Grand Avenue Club
Guest House of Milwaukee, Inc.
Holy Cathedral
Hunger Task Force, Inc.
IMPACT
Managed Health Services
Milwaukee Health Department
Monumental Baptist Food Pantry
Milwaukee Health Services
New Concept Self Development
New Hope Missionary Baptist Church
Next Door Foundation
North Side YMCA
Riverworks Development Corporation
S.E.T. Ministry

Salvation Army - West Food Pantry
Head Start-SDC
Siggenauk Center Food Pantry
Silver Spring Neighborhood Center.
St. Hyacinth Food Pantry
Supportive Homecare Options*
United Church of Christ
Walker's Point Youth & Family Center