Blue Ribbon Commission – Data/IT Work Group Update – Oct. 11, 2016

The report is a short summary of the work of the IT committee. We've identified a complex web of interdependencies between CA, DEL and the remaining parts of DSHS as well as some new investments that will be necessary to ensure that the agency can deliver on the promise of its creation.

Required Major New Investments:

- FamLink upgrade. Core database of at-risk children and the interface used by caseworkers, licensors, and most employees at CA. It includes all information about children, adults, and families that have become involved, even tangentially, with the CA system.
    - Reasons for upgrade:
        - Current system is decades old. Required maintenance is increasingly difficult.
        - Federal government is pushing states to upgrade to new interface standard (CCWIS instead of SACWIS).
        - Current system will not allow integration of child and family contact information from prevention programs.
        - User interface is painful for caseworkers, and doesn't support prevention program information. Without an upgrade the new agency cannot coordinate enrollment in multiple programs, nor can it evaluate the results of those investments.
    - Multi-biennium effort to implement changes. Probably four to six years.
    - Federal Government will pay at least 50% of the cost.
- New payment system to pay foster homes, childcare providers, and other vendors of services to children and families. Both CA and DEL use Social Services Payment System (SSPS), a 40-year-old program written in COBOL and running on a mainframe. The new program would be a more modern design running on a PC server backend that is much cheaper to run and faster.
    - Reasons for upgrade:
        - Maintenance is failing. Hard to find COBOL programmers.
        - We cannot audit payments easily. DEL and ESA currently subject to multi-million penalties from Federal Government as a result of failing audits.
        - Could be cheaper to run.
        - Would allow process improvements in how providers submit bills and how payments are made, including electronic payments and bills. We could stop using expensive paper warrants and move firmly into the 20th century.
    - Most likely this would be an off-the-shelf purchase with minor customization.
    - The transfer of SSPS and the upgrade would need to include some ancillary modules (CARS, Taxes reporting) for the new agency to be successful.
- There are a few additional IT systems that DEL doesn't have and we won't be able to take from DSHS (background check, cost allocation tool, positive time capture for employees, recovery account tracker, etc.) We believe these tools are available commercially.

Significant work continues to identify necessary resources to run a stand-alone agency. We are not yet at the point of publishing actual numbers. The main issue is how much service is provided by central DSHS and the FTE count and budget necessary to shift those functions to the new agency. It is likely that there will be some overlap – services that must be available to the new agency, but that cannot be easily shifted out of DSHS. This analysis process will continue for many more months. The overlap cost is likely to be in the low tens of millions for the entire shift. The IT work is a part of this. This cost-shift information is critical for the fiscal note on the bill implementing the new agency, but is not strategic and should not affect the deliberations of the Commission.

More work remains to analyze the impact of DEL's switch to Salesforce.com for an upgrade to licensing staff support. Licensing foster homes is a similar process that is currently handled by FamLink and we will need to consider carefully the direction. The per-user costs of salesforce are not insubstantial, but we believe the functionality increase is worthwhile.