

Dear Representative Poleski,

Thank you for your openness to input on the MiSACWIS system developed for child welfare information. Family Service & Children's Aid (FSCA) has struggled with that implementation and I believe our experience is not unique.

First, let me confirm that we at FSCA believe that a reliable, comprehensive child welfare information system that provides solid data for decision making and payments is desirable and needed. Unfortunately, the current MiSACWIS system is neither reliable nor comprehensive. As the result, small agencies like FSCA have and continue to struggle with increasing time spent trying to participate in a dysfunctional data system.

As the result of the Michigan Federation for Children and Families' request for member agencies to complete a survey to capture the fiscal impact of MiSACWIS implementation on its member agencies, FSCA management took a detailed look at the fiscal impact of MiSACWIS on our agency, identifying the cost of additional activities required by the system. I would like to share briefly FSCA's response as an example of one small agency's experience.

MiSACWIS has increased the workload of our child welfare staff, finance staff and IT manager – totaling 6 child welfare staff and 3 staff in IT, finance and support–by over 8% in the past 9 months incurring additional costs of roughly \$41,000, without any related revenue to support additional staff or overtime. These increased responsibilities and estimated cost of change to date does not include any of the changes the agency made to be in compliance with changes in the field related to the Modified Settlement Agreement (MSA).

Agency costs include an additional 210 plus man-hours of training for system implementation including classroom and site based training. Our child welfare case managers (3 staff) spend 3-4 hours more weekly to enter data into the system, negotiate system problems, work with the Help Desk and interface with one, two or three levels of approval through the system after our internal approval systems. DHS is aware of the cumbersome approval process in certain areas, and is working to modify. Finance staff spends 3-4 hours more each foster parent reimbursement payroll – and we have less than 35 children in placement! The system as it is constructed virtually ensures problems with payments. Our IT Manager spends 1/3 of his time each week on MiSACWIS problems, updates to knowledge and interface with workers, finance and the help desk.

Our agency has had to secure an advance from DHS against just some of the past receivables we carry for DHS or county bills for services already rendered. It is very difficult to open or close payments on a child in foster care, and there is no reconciliation mechanism. There is \$26,000 outstanding from services provided prior to MiSACWIS implementation, and \$59,000 still not paid since implementation occurred.

We are a community based agency with a \$2.2 million budget across 14 programs; foster care and adoption constitute about three-quarters of a million of that including foster parent reimbursements. We can ill afford the additional outlay of human resources and increased financial burden caused by the implementation of an inefficient system. Our partners in the public sector are making every effort to make the system work but it is cumbersome and inefficient. On a daily basis we receive notices regarding “refinements” in the system designed to fix problems, refinements that add additional demands on worker time. As time goes on, workers are becoming more and more frustrated with the increased time sitting at a computer screen, time that could better be used helping the children and families our agency mission is focused on.

I cannot represent the exact impact on other small, medium and large agencies - on staffing, overtime, increased IT, training, turnover, computer hardware and other technology, cyber liability insurance or even other costs we did not envision, but I know who can very competently, Federation Executive Director Janet Snyder and Director of Child Welfare policy Kadi Prout (517-485-8552) would both definitely share the aggregate results of the MiSACWIS survey as it becomes available and also member agency experiences with MISACWIS.

I know this may reach you too late to advise the committee on problems in your district, but hope it helps you understand the problems we encounter.

Thanks so much for listening and for your solid and informed representation.

Sincerely,

Judy Jove  
Executive Director, FSCA