Response to Questions on the 2016 LOBs

Request By: Supervisor Herrity   **Relevant LOB(s):** N/A

Question: How are Department of Family Services (DFS) metrics that drive efficiency communicated and shared within the organization? How are they used?

Response:

The Human Services System in Fairfax County has adopted a Results-Based Accountability (RBA) system to measure performance and outcomes across the system, and to provide guidance and direction in decision-making, strategic planning, and program management. Beginning with the results that the system wants to achieve allows employees and stakeholders at all levels of the organization and community to contribute to and share accountability for results. Key data points are being compiled into a Human Services Report Card, expected to be released in late 2016, to monitor results at the system level and measure the impact of Human Services programs on the individuals and families being served. Using the RBA approach, the Department of Family Services (DFS) has developed performance plans at the program level to identify and measure the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the agency's services. DFS uses the information that is collected to monitor performance, allocate resources, and make programmatic improvements in order to tailor service delivery to the needs of County residents.

How Information is Shared in DFS
Data and outcome indicators are routinely discussed and integrated into program meetings in all of the major program areas in DFS. Outcome reports are a standard meeting agenda item and are shared and discussed among staff, supervisors, and program managers. Pertinent information is also disseminated to senior managers so that all levels of the organization have the most up-to-date information necessary to make informed decisions about how to deliver services in the most cost-effective manner. Regularly scheduled reports and charts are shared within each program area summarizing trends and changes in their services and workloads, and identifying challenges.

As part of the department's strategic planning process, a Data Matters workgroup was established to develop internal mechanisms for educating staff in the use and analysis of data and outcome indicators. Learning activities have been developed for staff in each division and an educational video was created which explains how and why data is collected and how data drives priorities and decision making in DFS and the Human Services system as a whole. Future plans include continuing to train staff in the use of data through predictive analytics to better align services and resources, while improving customer outcomes.

How Information is Utilized in DFS

DFS uses data to manage the department's programs and make programmatic decisions that are reflective of performance, workloads, and budgetary constraints. Additionally, many DFS programs have state and federal requirements that must be met, so managers in each division use the reports that are produced to monitor progress and compliance with these requirements and goals. DFS uses metrics and outcomes within the organization that fall into four main categories: process improvement and program design; staffing and caseload assignment decisions; organizational management and resource allocation; and monitoring progress towards program goals. Below are just a few examples of ways that metrics have been used and incorporated into the planning and decision-making process for each of the major categories.

1. **Process Improvement and Program Design**

   The DFS Call Center is the telephonic front door to the department, receiving more than 160,000 calls annually. Approximately 75 percent of calls received by Call Center representatives were transferred to financial and medical assistance workers to provide assistance to clients, which decreased the amount of time available for casework. DFS transitioned the Call Center from a "caller referral" into a first point of contact customer service resolution function. This resulted in a 170 percent increase in caller resolution rates within one years' time, providing caseworkers more than 6,080 hours of time to work on processing cases and performing other valuable casework activities instead of answering general case related client service questions.

2. **Staffing and Caseload Assignment Decisions**

   Monitoring program performance through metrics allows management to determine where staffing flexibility exists to support other DFS programs. When service demands began to increase throughout the department, instead of requesting more local resources, 8.5 FTE positions were reallocated from Cross Division Services to the Self Sufficiency Division and 1.0 FTE position was reallocated to the Children's Services Act (CSA) to streamline front desk walk-in customer service reception and CSA requirements. Processes were redesigned and technology is continuously leveraged to help address changing needs prior to requesting additional resources.

3. **Organizational Management and Resource Allocation**

   In FY 2011, DFS underwent an initiative aimed at redesigning internal structures and service provision for increased efficiency and effectiveness in the Children, Youth and Families (CYF) Division. When the foster care caseload declined, nine positions were redeployed by eliminating the CYF Regional Management Structure, eliminating a Communications Specialist position, aligning child protective services and foster care legal support caseloads, restructuring the adoption unit, and reducing administrative support

functions. These nine positions were redeployed to create new child centered and family-focused services, including family engagement, kinship care and father engagement units, that focus on youth and family strengths and needs. Some of these services are eligible for state reimbursement through the CSA program, and as a result, the net cost of the services was reduced and better outcomes have been achieved.

4. **Monitoring Progress Toward Program Goals**
   The home delivered meals program administers an annual satisfaction survey regarding the meals, with the goal of maintaining at least 90 percent satisfaction with the program. The meals are delivered by volunteers with scheduled routes all over the County and at any point in time the program has about 465 customers. Staff began receiving complaints about undelivered meals in FY 2013, though overall customer satisfaction remained high at 94 percent. In response, the program began tracking the number of undelivered meals and observed that the number of undelivered meals was continuing to increase. The staff determined that even with aggressive recruitment of volunteers, the program could no longer sustain delivery of meals five days per week and it was necessary to redesign the home delivered meals program that had been in existence for about 35 years. Program staff researched other home delivered meals programs and learned about the option of frozen meals. Frozen meals were initiated with delivery of three days per week in FY 2014. Following this change the customer satisfaction rate dropped to 86 percent and program staff responded by working with the food vendors to provide options that were universally appealing and tasted good after heating in microwaves. As a result, the customer satisfaction rate rose in FY 2015 to 92 percent and to 93 percent in FY 2016. Using metrics allowed program staff to identify problems affecting the program goals and make appropriate adjustments to improve services to County residents.