

What Policy Makers Need to Know About Administrative Simplification

Simplification, uniformity and alignment of human services programs, while maintaining program integrity is essential to building a more effective service delivery system for clients while providing administrative cost avoidance for state and local government.

Public resources should be primarily invested in improving outcomes for clients and not on overly complex administrative tasks.

MACSSA Policy Principles

- ▶ Administrative simplification.
- ▶ Investments in technology.
- ▶ Aligning funding with expected outcomes.

Minnesota's Human Services is Overly Complex

- ▶ The Office of the Legislative Auditor's 2007 study of Human Service Administration in the State of Minnesota found that Minnesota's human services system is overly complex with many eligibility rules too complex to automate.
- ▶ This complexity results in significant expenditures of publicly funded resources and presents barriers to clients trying to access programs.
- ▶ As the state moves towards modernization of its human services technology systems, it is critical that programs be simplified and streamlined in a way that does not jeopardize program integrity.
- ▶ Failure to simplify programs prior to bringing new technology systems online will increase the probability that these systems will be more expensive and perhaps even unworkable.
- ▶ One of the biggest issues leading to complexity in the system is the different rules across programs regarding the treatment of income, assets, household composition, budgeting and reporting for purposes of determining and maintaining eligibility.

Simplification, Uniformity and Alignment of Eligibility Rules

- ▶ A large percent of clients served may be eligible for and would benefit from multiple programs. Simplification, uniformity and alignment of rules across programs would result in a more efficient, cost effective system that is more understandable to the client.
- ▶ Simplification, uniformity and alignment would free up counties to focus more on moving clients toward self-sufficiency.

Key Examples of Complexity in the System:

Income

The differential treatment of income across human services programs presents significant challenges to the effective administration of programs. Each of the income maintenance programs has different rules for the treatment of income for purposes of determining eligibility.

Assets

The variable treatment of assets across programs adds yet another layer of complexity to the administration of programs. The following is a select example of programs, each of which has unique asset limits and rules for what is counted as an asset: Minnesota Family Investment Program/Diversionsary Work Program, Minnesota Supplemental Aid, General Assistance, and Group Residential Housing. Compounding the challenges this creates is the volume of asset categories staff must verify. The following are examples of just some of the categories of assets requiring verification: cash, vehicles, homestead property, household goods, retirement accounts, burial plots, burial contracts, life insurance, and student financial aid.

Household Composition

Eligibility for public assistance programs is determined through “assistance units” which is defined as a person or group of people who live together whose needs, income and assets are considered together in determining eligibility for benefits. Each program has unique rules for determining who is included or excluded for purposes of determining eligibility for that specific program. For example, some programs will include the spouse of a person applying for assistance in the “assistance unit,” while others do not.

For more information, please contact:



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Five Key Questions Policy Makers Should Ask:

1. Does the policy make things simpler and more understandable for the client?
2. Does the policy improve outcomes for clients?
3. Is the policy better aligned with the current system?
4. Does the policy make it easier or harder to modernize human services technology systems?
5. Does the policy increase or decrease administrative work?

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