



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
SENIOR & DISABLED SERVICES DIVISION
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AUTHORIZED BY: _____

SDSD Administrator/Deputy/
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INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

SDSD-IM-00-27

Date: March 1, 2000

TO: SDSD District and Unit Managers
Area Agency on Aging Directors

SUBJECT: Systems Availability Study to Start March 13, 2000

INFORMATION:

Systems users have expressed concerns about the amount of time that the “system” is unavailable. This is often referred to as “downtime”. As you know, the availability of systems support is dependent on a wide variety of complicated systems and communications devices. It is important to all of us and to our ability to carry out our mission that our systems work reliably. In the last year OIS has made several changes that will improve accessibility. See the *Recent Improvements* item later in this document for more information about these changes. Our next step is to identify areas where we are having problems and to develop appropriate action plans. To do this we must have accurate detailed information about the incidences of system unavailability. SDSD Administration has requested that OIS perform a study of the system availability. OIS systems staff and Help Desk staff will conduct a study of the issues that effect system access. We have asked OIS to take several actions to help us identify the issues but information from our users is essential to the success of the study. When you call to report a systems issue the OIS Help Desk will be collecting specific information that will help to identify those issues which are related to systems unavailability. It is our goal to identify those components of the information systems support network that are unreliable and focus our remediation efforts on these areas.

When will the study be conducted?

We will start March 13th and track system unavailability for one month. Depending on the information provided we will extend the study if necessary.

What will OIS do?

Overview - OIS will take action in two specific areas, collecting information from OIS applications staff and working with the Help Desk to collect information from users. They will work with the systems application staff to track problems that occur that cause mainframe screens or files to be unavailable. SDSD/AAA staff use mainframe applications that belong to many different divisions. Each work unit has information about problems in their applications and files but we do not have a good comprehensive view. When a problem occurs OIS will collect detailed information about the date, time and screens/programs/files that were involved. OIS and the SDSD Information Systems Coordination Unit have worked with the Help Desk to develop a list of questions that are designed to identify the components that are causing the system to be unavailable. When users call in to report problems the Help Desk staff will be asking these questions and entering the information into a database. This information will be analyzed and used to determine future action.

What we need from you?

Be prepared to provide the essential information when you call or email the Help Desk. They will need to know where in your attempt to use the system the problem occurred. For us to make progress in reducing the amount of time the systems are unavailable we need to track the problems down to their individual components. Following is a simple description of the components. The questions the Help Desk asks will be designed to identify where the problem is occurring so we can target our action plans appropriately. The Help Desk staff will need to know exactly what you were doing (screen name or task), the time that a problem occurs and any error messages that are displayed at the time. A sample of the Help Desk questions is attached.

Background - Components of Systems Access

Your PC -

The actual piece of equipment at your desk is the first step in all systems support.

Your local server -

Your pc connects to a local server. This local server has some programs on it and it is where your documents can be saved.

Your Oregon ACCESS server -

For Oregon ACCESS to work your computer must connect to an Oregon ACCESS server that stores your offices case information.

Routers and Communication Lines -

The communication between your local office and the central or regional offices is dependent on the quality and stability of the communications hardware and software. The data lines must be sufficient to carry the load.

Mainframe Connection -

Before you can use the mainframe you must connect to it. This is where your computer and server talk to the mainframe. You know you are connected to the mainframe when you see the main menu (sample attached).

Applications on the Mainframe -

When you logon to the mainframe using your RACF ID, you use specific screens. These screens are part of the applications within the mainframe.

Recent Improvements

Mainframe systems - In the process of reviewing our systems for Y2K we found several places where we could reduce our dependence on other systems' files without sacrificing functionality or accuracy. We made those changes in November 1999 and, as a result, we were able to pay claims during the first week of January. Without those changes our CEP payment screens would have been unavailable much of the first week of January because some OMAP files were unavailable.

Server system - The SDSD server based system is Oregon ACCESS. Part of the system relies on a central server for storing information. In September there were problems with this server that caused significant problems for Oregon ACCESS. Since then, OIS has added a second server (a back-up) that can be used if the primary server has problems. In systemeize this is called redundancy and is actually a good thing.

Contact Person and Number:

To report unavailability issues -

DHS OIS Help Desk (503) 945-5623

OIS Application System Manager coordinating the study -

Sue Eastman (503) 945-6564

OIS Help Desk Staff Coordinating their activities -

Richard Cyphert (503) 945-6971

SDSD/FSS Information Systems Coordination unit manager -

Meg Killgorecathcart (503) 945-5835

Oregon ACCESS project manager -

Judy Giggy (503) 373-1993 x269

Help Desk Questions - System Availability Survey

The Help Desk is participating with a Systems Availability survey for all SDSD/AAA offices. When you contact the Help Desk with a systems availability issue, please have the information available to answer the following questions. Whenever possible, please have screen print or message text available for Help Desk staff. During the study period the Help Desk staff will be asking additional questions regarding the availability issue.

1. Are you able to logon to your PC? If not:
 - a. Is there an error message? Please have screen print or message text available if possible.
 - b. Is this affecting other staff or just your pc?
 - c. When did you first notice this? (Need specific time)

2. Can you open GroupWise or E-mail? If not:
 - a. Is there an error message? (Have screen print or message text if possible)
 - b. Is this affecting other staff or just you?
 - c. When did you first notice this? (Need specific time)

3. Can you log onto Oregon ACCESS?
 - a. Is there an error message? (Have screen print or message text if possible)
 - b. Is this affecting other staff or just you?
 - c. When did you first notice this? (Need specific time)

4. Can you log onto the Mainframe? If not:
 - a. Is there an error message? (Have screen print or message text if possible)
 - b. Is this affecting other staff or just you?
 - c. When did you first notice this? (Need specific time)

5. If you are able to logon to the Mainframe, what screen are you trying to work in?
If screen or file is unavailable:
 - a. Is there an error message? (Have screen print or message text if possible)
 - b. Is this affecting other staff or just you?
 - c. When did you first notice this? (Need specific time)

6. Have you received any notice of system availability?