



SAFE MODERNIZATION IN THE DIVISION OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

SOCIAL SERVICES APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
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ISSUE BRIEF

SUMMARY

SAFE is a computer system used by the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) to provide for child abuse and neglect case management. SAFE began development in 1996, became the system of record for Child Protective Services in May 1998, and became the system of record for other DCFS services in November 1999. SAFE was written using older software language that is currently more difficult to support, not internet browser-based and cannot be modified to run on mobile devices, and not consistent with current Department of Technology database *standard platforms*. DCFS is preparing to move to more modern technology providing a browser-based environment with which most DCFS workers are more familiar. Much of the work DCFS staff does is in the field and not in an office. Four recommendations from the Human Services In-depth Budget Review and the Office of Legislative Auditor General DCFS performance audit encouraged DCFS to utilize advances in technology to increase DCFS worker productivity and mobility. DCFS requested new funding from the Governor to modernize its SAFE system. The Governor recommended DCFS use existing funds within its budget to proceed with the modernization. The Analyst recommends DCFS proceed with its SAFE modernization project using internal funding sources, DCFS routinely report to the subcommittee and the Analyst on the project's status and current cost estimates, and DCFS develop performance measures associated with organizational efficiencies and worker productivity to demonstrate the anticipated benefits that modernizing the SAFE system would have on the core purposes of DCFS.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

1. The Fiscal Analyst recommends the subcommittee authorize DCFS to proceed with the development of the SAFE Modernization Project using one-time funding currently within the DCFS budget.
2. The Fiscal Analyst further recommends the subcommittee adopt intent language requiring DCFS to routinely report the project's status and current cost estimates.
3. The Fiscal Analyst further recommends DCFS develop performance measures associated with organizational efficiency and worker productivity to determine the benefit to front line staff resulting from the modernization of the division's case management system and the associated upgrading of technology provided to workers.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE HUMAN SERVICES IN-DEPTH BUDGET REVIEW AND THE DCFS PERFORMANCE AUDIT

The Human Services In-depth Budget Review (found at <http://le.utah.gov/interim/2010/pdf/00001613.pdf>) was assigned by the Executive Appropriations Committee (EAC) and later heard by EAC and the Social Services and Executive Offices and Criminal Justice appropriations subcommittees. The in-depth review included 15 major recommendations and 14 other additional recommendations. The two subcommittees passed intent language to have Human Services report back on the progress and status of the review's recommendations during the 2012 General Session. The Office of Legislative Auditor General (OLAG) did a performance audit on the Division of Child and Family Services (see Report 2011-02: *A Performance Audit of the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS)*) found at http://le.utah.gov/audit/ad_2011dl.htm) and subsequently reported to the Social Services Appropriations Subcommittee. The subcommittee heard the audit and passed intent language requiring DCFS report during the 2012 General Session on its actions and progress regarding the audit's recommendations with special emphasis on certain recommendations affecting the DCFS budget (SB 2, item 87 2011 General Session). Four recommendations in the review and audit deal either directly or indirectly with improving technology in DCFS in order to increase productivity and effectiveness of DCFS workers. These four recommendations are:

1. *Establish a pilot program that would decrease office time and increase field time by the use of non-traditional work schedules, laptops, cell phones, and other technologies* (in-depth review)
2. *DCFS further implement technologies such as the transcription service and portable laptops to enhance caseworker mobility* (performance audit)

3. *Plan in advance to take advantage of future funding opportunities in order to benefit from technology advances when the opportunity arises (in-depth review)*
4. *Explore alternatives to housing case workers in single, private offices and paying for multiple high-cost leases around the state (in-depth review)*

In response to these recommendations and to the inherent problems with the older SAFE system, DCFS has stated:

Portable laptop computers have been provided to all caseworkers with one-time Federal grant funds, strengthening capacity to complete work while in the field. Blackberry or smart phones have also been provided to all caseworkers with enhanced capacity to text and access e-mail. Software applications were updated for staff statewide. Additional software was purchased to expand ability for web-based training and to facilitate teleconferencing. Transcription service is being analyzed, with the goal to help workers identify when it is most cost effective.

DCFS, through internal savings, has accumulated funding it would like to use to begin modernizing its SAFE computer system.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES FOR THE SAFE MODERNIZATION PROJECT

The Analyst recommends DCFS establish performance measures associated with organizational efficiency and worker productivity to determine the benefit on front line staff resulting from the modernization of the division's case management system and the associated upgrading of technology provided to workers. The Analyst further recommends DCFS include these performance measures in the division's annual reporting to the Legislature.

BACKGROUND

SAFE is a computer system that utilizes client-server technology and a relational database system to provide for child abuse and neglect case management. SAFE began development in 1996, became the system of record for Child Protective Services in May 1998, and became the system of record for other DCFS services in November 1999. SAFE was written in a *legacy* software language (a computer development environment that is no longer current and compatible with industry technology standards, has a limited product support level and enhancement path and has a shrinking customer base) called *PowerBuilder*. PowerBuilder is a technology that is "outdated in several respects and within which there is no clear technological path forward for large applications like SAFE. PowerBuilder has diminished significantly in its market share worldwide and as a result it is not expected that the vendor will put a significant effort into enhancing the product." Currently PowerBuilder developers are difficult to find and expensive to train. Due to limitations of the PowerBuilder environment, SAFE is not browser-based and cannot be modified to run on mobile devices. If SAFE were to be modified to run on mobile devices, DCFS would encounter significant licensing costs. DCFS is looking to move to more modern technology, which will provide better responsiveness and more flexibility in making changes to the system and provide a browser-based environment with which DCFS workers are more familiar and more productive. The department is also concerned about the "risks of being able to support the existing system." The department intends to move forward on SAFE Modernization in a "phased approach." The department is currently at the stage of doing its own internal assessment of the various modernization options and cost analysis, although through comparisons with others states doing similar modernization projects, preliminarily estimates the cost of modernization to be \$5,077,200 (\$3,758,900 General Fund – see Table 1 for a detail of the cost estimate). There will also be ongoing costs for web and application server hosting, database hosting, and software licensing and renewal. The department is having existing staff and some current contractors conduct a review and identify components for modernization. Recruitment will be sent out at the end of January for an analyst who will pull together the information. The department anticipates completion of the review, establishment of milestones, and more precise cost estimates by summer of 2012.

PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE OF SAFE MODERNIZATION

Table 1 provides the department's preliminary cost estimate for modernizing the SAFE system.

SAFE Modernization Cost Estimate

As of 12-3-11

Annual Costs for Duration of Project:	# of Staff	Hourly rate	Est. Hours	Total Est. Costs	4 Year Development Time	Total Est. Project Costs
4 Senior C#/ASP.Net Developers	4	90	2,080	748,800		
2 Senior Business Analysts	2	90	2,080	374,400		
	# of Staff	Monthly rate	# of months	Total Est. Costs		
Office Space, network Connections, phone	6	216	12	15,600		
Annual Software Licenses				18,000		
Total Annual Costs				1,156,800	4	4,627,200
One-time Costs:						
Equipment, Network, and Data Hosting				300,000		
Training of operational staff and end users				150,000		
Total One-time Costs				450,000		450,000
Sources of Revenue:						
Total Estimated Project Cost						5,077,200
Estimated Federal Title IV-E SAFE rate						51.93%
Federal Administrative SAFE rate						50.00%
Calculated Title IV-E SAFE rate amount (Cost x IV-E rate x Admin rate)						1,318,300
Estimated General Fund Cost for Total Project						3,758,900

Source: Division of Child and Family Services (modified for presentation purposes)

Table 1

GOALS OF THE SAFE MODERNIZATION PROJECT

The department has established the following goals regarding the SAFE Modernization Project:

- Establish a sustainable technical path for SAFE using proven, modern technologies with large market share
- Simplify SAFE navigation and provide a better user interface
- Increase SAFE web presence
- Increase SAFE availability for DCFS and approved non-DCFS users
- Improve ability to recruit and retain technical staff
- Align with state and industry database and software standards
- Provide ability for SAFE to interface to other systems more easily

- *Move toward a more agile process that allows for more timely releases to meet user business needs*

OTHER AGENCIES PARTICIPATING IN THE SAFE SYSTEM

The following agencies utilize the SAFE system to obtain DCFS data as required by federal or state law. These agencies do not input data into SAFE but only access information from the system. Given that fact, these agencies are not scheduled to participate financially in the modernization project.

- **Office of the Attorney General** – in order to have information to represent DCFS in court proceedings and provide legal advice.
- **Guardian ad Litem (GAL)** - in order to have information needed to be able to represent the child in court proceedings. In the future the GAL will only access SAFE information through an interface with its own system.
- **Office of Recovery Services** - SAFE and ORS share custody and child support information for the children in DCFS custody. This information is used in federal Adoption and Foster Care Reporting (AFCARS). ORS gathers child support payments as reimbursement to the state for the cost of foster care.
- **Department of Health** - for background MIS screening.
- **Department of Workforce Services (E-Rep)** – E-Rep has an interface with SAFE to provide access to and information for: 1) customer directory interface, 2) Title IV-E eligibility, and 3) Family Constellation interface.
- **Court clerks** - when looking up information for protective orders.
- **Office of Services Review** - to complete Case Process Reviews and Qualitative Case Reviews of the SAFE system as well as complete fatality reviews for children and other special studies that may arise.

The following agencies access SAFE in order to complete work that DCFS contracts with these agencies to provide:

- **Department of Health – Fostering Healthy Children** - to track the health needs and care of children in foster care.
- **Utah Foster Care Foundation** - to track recruitment and training of potential foster parents and in-service training for existing foster parents.

The Office of Licensing (OL) uses SAFE to input data on foster parents and to do background checks on applicants as required by statute. The information on foster parents is shared between OL and DCFS and is required to be in SAFE for federal certification. As a result of the requirement to share and the assistance by OL in inputting data into SAFE, there has been no request for OL to share in the cost of SAFE.

Two agencies have participated in funding SAFE:

- **The Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS)** - uses SAFE as its system of record for Adult Protective Services Investigations and ongoing services. DAAS has provided funding for programming changes for those modules of SAFE that it uses. In the modernization project, DAAS would pay for programming specific to its own SAFE modules.
- **The Juvenile Court System** - a number of interfaces have been completed to share information with the Juvenile Court System. Data sharing includes things like address information for court cases and related person, phone information, termination of parental rights, attorney and judge assignments, and DCFS child placement information. There is a plan in place for further interfaces. Specifically, the Court Improvement Project, which oversees the interface between the Court CARE system and SAFE, has also participated directly in assisting with interface development and establishing infrastructure for the SAFE Modernization project and has provided funding for some of the new software tools needed for SAFE modernization.