Walking a “Tightrope” –
Using Data to Seek the
Right Balance

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Today, we want to …

• Describe South Carolina’s “balancing act” as we re-engineered our SNAP & TANF business processes

• How we tried to strike that “balance” using data

• Tell you about our “falls”

• How we continue to modify
Preparation for our Tightrope Walk Began with our “2010 Initiatives”

- Imaged SNAP & TANF paper files
- Revamped imaging system to assign cases & developed queues
- Started Universal Caseload
  - First, counties
  - Next, with a region
  - Then planned to take it statewide
A New Governor
A New Director

Change in Plans

• Specialized technique – the eligibility functions broken into components & the function is specialized

• 1 component would be a call center where clients “call into” interviewers at the client’s convenience
Long Before Specialization, Used Administrative Files & Reports to Analyze

- Types of Actions that came in
- # of Actions
- How Long (on Average) did each Action take
- # of Staff needed to perform these Actions
Planning, More Planning, More Data

• State divided into regions
• Each region assigned a function based partly on # of workers with 1 exception
• Pee Dee Region has high poverty, high unemployment & little turnover in DSS staff
• Pee Dee Region chosen for the Call Center (phone interviewers)

Along
“To Do” list …
• Prepared assignments to rotate within SCOSA
• Trained workers
• Reviewed data again
• Communicated to the agency
• Communicated to clients & partners
Planned to “Flip the Switch” in July 2012
Not Quite As Planned

Anticipated 40,000 – 60,000 calls /mo.

Got 2.2 million calls in 1st 2 weeks

What went wrong?

Printed cards with the interview phone number & gave to all clients

• Took all of 1st month to fix problem

• Because clients could not get through, began receiving complaints from the Governor’s Office, Legislators, & Budget Committee
The Aftermath

• Internal databases had “complaints” skyrocketing
• Charts from phone provider documented volume of calls

How we solved it …

• Created 3 “individualized” 8 digit pin numbers for state (1 just for TANF, 2 for SNAP)
• Letters to clients gave pin # & new instructions
• Created an “Interview Message”
Learned that Our Phone Provider Not Adequate to Support Volume

• Dealt with Issues like
  
  Dropped & Garbled calls
  
  Queue overloads (in the cloud, out of the cloud, waiting in cloud …)
  
  Garbled messages

• And … Phone Vendor on a state sole source contract
The Interview Gates Finally Opened

- Eligibility workers in 2 regions doing processing of New Applications / Annual Reviews were - at 1st - blissful

- When the Interview gates opened, workers flooded with cases already untimely

- Data - wild again - timeliness issues

- More data analyses to examine the question “More processors needed?”
• After analyzing the # of changes workers did, decided to specialize even more with a “Change Center”
• Vacancies in Interview Center (FAIC) justified a Trainer just for that region
• Call Center data indicated need for specialized Spanish-speaking sub unit
• “Find It, Fix It” became “Find It, Report It” – data is now determining repeat error-prone workers
How does our Tightrope Work Now?
1 Year Later... Would We Do it Again?

Yes, counties for the most part love it

But ... still trying to achieve that balance

• Redefinition of Roles

  Hired Social Workers
  Now Interviewers or Processors

Some workers don’t like the change

• Losing Face to Face contact with clients
  but still responsible for the clients

• “Must work like a factory” but working
  with humans with real problems

• Helping Supervisors to “Supervise a
  Process”