

Modernization

HENNEPIN COUNTY MINNESOTA

Hennepin County has a shared interest in the quality, stability and advancement of the state-provided technology systems our staff are required to use every day. Hennepin supports new legislative investments in Human Services technology, in alignment with the position taken by MACSSA in their 2023 Position Statement¹.

Hennepin supports targeted, incremental transformation of DHS technology systems, coupled with administrative simplification. Specific interests within the broader investment proposal include Service Delivery Transformation, improving the MNbenefits tool, SSIS and METS, to better serve residents.

Service delivery transformation

The county's desire to provide coordinated, person-centered service delivery is constrained by program policies and the DHS technology environment. An emphasis on systems' interoperability and process automation, along with alignment and simplification of programs and processes, would reduce duplication of effort and integrate service delivery across program areas. This service delivery transformation will require a gradual, planful overhaul of systems and practices, ideally through a series of small but impactful improvements to the technology and policy environment. A financial investment in resources to implement integrated technologies and streamlined business processes is needed for this transformation.

MNbenefits

MNbenefits is an online, mobile-friendly tool that makes it quick and easy for residents to apply for benefits programs. The county has received and processed over 125,000 MNbenefits applications since its initial rollout in 2021 and receives around 300 applications a day.

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¹ [MO1 - Tech Investments - 2023 Statement.pdf \(revize.com\)](#)

While successful, MNbenefits has created workload challenges for county staff. MNbenefits is not integrated with DHS eligibility systems. Eligibility workers must re-enter information collected by MNbenefits into the MAXIS and MEC2 systems, and applicants do not have a way to check on application status unless they contact county workers. Service delivery transformation efforts should improve the MNbenefits application process:

1. Implement a client dashboard on MNbenefits where residents can check the status of their application.
2. Automate the movement of MNbenefits data into the MAXIS and MEC2 systems, with a first focus on applicant demographic information and automatic creation of a pending case. Staging the remainder of the application for worker review and acceptance of the data into the systems with no re-entry of data would also be beneficial.

These would dramatically reduce the time and effort required of county case assignment and eligibility staff, while providing applicants with more timely and accessible information about their benefits application.

Social Services Information System

The Social Services Information System (SSIS) is the primary system used by county social workers to provide a wide range of social services including child and adult protection, long-term care support and behavioral health services. Inefficiencies in the SSIS require county social workers to spend an inordinate amount of time on data entry, taking time away from working with the residents they serve. The system has not kept pace with evolving expectations for delivery of protective services and for case management.

The county supports investments to modernize the SSIS in ways that improve its performance and support efficient and effective county operations. Particular attention should be given to the DHS Case Management Redesign initiative, which includes changes to Targeted Case Management (TCM) time reporting and reimbursement rates. An overhaul of some SSIS functionality will be required to support the TCM changes by making time reporting quick and easy for county staff. Failure to include SSIS improvements in conjunction with Case Management Redesign would lead to a major reduction in revenue the county needs to provide its case management services.

Minnesota Eligibility Technology System

The Minnesota Eligibility Technology System (METS) is the health care eligibility system connected to the MNsure health insurance exchange. County eligibility workers use METS to process and manage Medical Assistance cases for families and individuals. County workers must continue to work around functional limitations that have existed in METS since its inception nearly a decade ago.

The end of the federal Public Health Emergency will trigger the resumption of annual eligibility renewals, resulting in a significant workload increase for county workers while also creating a risk of interruption of health services (and the federal funds that pay for those services) for those who do not complete their renewals on time. Additionally, many states have streamlined renewal processes in ways that maintain health care for eligible individuals and Minnesota should implement similar simplifications to help residents retain coverage.

This impending workload increase adds to the demand for a more efficient METS system and simplified, person-centered health care policy. DHS has a project in progress to enable recipients to submit renewal information online through MNsure, but the state is facing resource (funding) constraints that will limit its ability to provide METS functionality that would enable counties to process the renewals in a timely and efficient manner. Investment in METS is necessary to close the functional gaps that are costly to the county both for the long term and immediately to stand up planned efficiencies to address the surge and potential loss of coverage due to the end of the Public Health Emergency.