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## Problems nagging at welfare vendors

### Staffing, benefit delays cited in internal memos

By Ken Kusmer | Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS – Internal and federal reports on the state's privatization of welfare eligibility note problems with staffing, large caseloads, delays in processing applications for benefits and other related issues.

State human services chief Mitch Roob said most of the problems aren't new and have long plagued the state's application process for the food stamps, Medicaid and other benefits received by 1.1 million people.

Whether new or not, the reports point to problems that a team of vendors led by IBM Corp. and Affiliated Computer Services Inc. must confront and overcome to effectively deliver the benefits relied upon by one of every six children, seniors and needy and disabled people in Indiana.

"Staff confusion regarding specific processing guidelines for each of the Public Assistance Programs is an ongoing problem," noted an internal improvement plan for Marion County dated May 30 that was obtained by The Associated Press.

Because the Family and Social Services Administration and the IBM-ACS team time need more time to move welfare eligibility from the state's hands to the vendors, Roob, the agency's secretary, said the private team will not take over before October, a month later than previously announced.

Advocates said FSSA and the vendors must do what is necessary to overcome the problems including delays in processing applications before benefits can be delivered.

"It does provide a hardship for people and the helping agencies," said Patti O'Callaghan of Lafayette, president of an advocate network called the Indiana Coalition for Human Services.

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