Introduction

The Strategies of Success (SOS) is developed to enable the state of Missouri to achieve performance measures as stated below for the Food Stamp Program. Performance measures are unchanged for federal fiscal year (FFY) 2003:

- 95% application timeliness,
- 95% timely delivery of expedited benefits,
- 95% correct identification of applications eligible for expedited service,
- 92% payment accuracy,
- 94% of negative actions (closings and rejections) processed correctly,
- 90% timely establishment of claims.

Meeting these performance measures enhances customer service and improves administration of the Food Stamp Program in Missouri.

Data collected and analyzed through the Special Initiative review process for FFY 2002 identified the element of wages and salaries as our biggest problem area. Our payment accuracy focus for FFY 2003 is to improve budgeting of earned income by:
- correctly determining at application the income the household has to be budgeted during the certification period,
- verifying income amount,
- accurately projecting the amount of income that is to be budgeted during the certification process.

Moving the Food Stamp Program to FAMIS is anticipated to have a positive impact on our error rate while improving customer service. Ineffective interviewing has been determined to contribute to the error rate problem. Piloting of FAMIS was successfully completed in December 2002. FAMIS requires an interactive interview to compete the interview process. Additionally the system will make the eligibility and benefit determination, which will correct worker misapplication of policy errors. Statewide rollout will begin January 2003 and will be completed by September 2003.

Quality Assurance (QA) staff will complete two county/area office reviews in FFY 2003. In addition to the office reviews we will continue to monitor compliance with performance targets through management reports, case file reviews and analysis of Quality Control (QC) data. The focus of one of the office reviews is to evaluate the impact of FAMIS on office policy and procedures.   This will provide us with important information to be shared with other offices in preparing to convert the Food Stamp Program to FAMIS. Solutions to identified management issues will be suggested.

Corrective action plans will be developed or adjusted as needed for other areas in which performance falls short of the expected target. Falling below 90 percent rather than 95 percent for application timeliness, timely delivery of expedited benefits and correct identification of expedited applications requires a corrective action plan to be developed. Falling below 90 percent for timely establishment of claims two quarters in a row will also result in a corrective action plan being developed.

Earned Income

Budgeting of earned income continues to be the most significant error element and is a statewide problem. The term earned income includes wages, salaries, self-employment and other earned income. Analysis of Quality Control (QC) errors for FFY 2002 year-to-date (October 2001 through July 2002) identifies earned income as the error element in 52 or 42.6 percent of the dollar error cases with 38 of these errors occurring at application. This is a slight decrease of 3.4 percentage points from FFY 2001.

Client error attributed to 34 of these errors. In some instances agency staff contributed to the error by not checking IMES or resolving discrepancies in information provided, not obtaining verification or pursuing management. Agency error was responsible for 18 errors. The greatest client error causal factor is due to client failure to report. The most significant agency error causal factor is due to policy being misapplied.

Action Taken:

- The Staff Training Unit released the first distance learning computer based training CD developed by them in January 2002. The training CD was released statewide to all Income Maintenance supervisors/managers. The CD contains three separate training lessons or training modules on different aspects of the Food Stamp Program. The three lessons are:
    - $\Rightarrow$ Food Stamp Household Composition: Parents and Children,
    - $\Rightarrow$ Food Stamp Earned Income Change Reporting,
    - $\Rightarrow$ Food Stamp Income: Actual vs. Converted.

- Quality Assurance staff conducted quarterly conferences with area and county administration staff to primarily discuss food stamp payment accuracy issues and FAMIS implementation. Reports summarizing QC findings and QA case reading findings. Adherence to performance measures were shared and discussed during the conference. Corrective actions were developed as appropriate.

- QC errors were discussed with county staff to identify areas of policy misapplication and areas where policy and procedures could be strengthened. This process serves as the county staffs' opportunity to challenge a QC decision. The QC error conferences are completed following completion of the review and prior to transmitting the QC case review findings.

- New reporting requirements for earned income households certified for six months was implemented in May 2001. Households identified as "earned income" are required to report only changes causing their gross income to exceed 130 percent of poverty level. This policy change supports working families by reducing the number of contacts needed with county staff and reduces the number of client errors due to non-reporting of changes.

- A new food stamp case reading process was developed and trained to all front-line supervisors. The process advocates targeting case reading in two of the three monthly case reviews completed and observing worker interview techniques once during a quarter.

Correct budgeting of income is the eligibility factor targeted in the case readings. This implementation was complete in May 2001.

- A policy change was issued via memorandum IM-197 dated November 5, 2001 requiring an interview at every application to facilitate discussion with the applicant regarding anticipated income and income changes. The interview may be in-person or by phone. An in-person interview is required once per year.

- Computer based training (Take-10) was posted to the Intranet on August 22, 2001. The Take-10 is titled *May the Source Be With You.* It provides an opportunity for staff to check their knowledge about what is considered verified upon receipt. This training supports the change reporting policy for earned income households.

Proposed Action:

- Complete conversion of the Food Stamp Program to FAMIS. Statewide rollout will begin in January 2003 and will be completed by September 2003. The system requires an interactive interview to complete the application process. This should facilitate better exchange between the applicant and worker of information regarding the eligibility unit circumstances. The system does determine eligibility and benefit amount based on information that is entered. According to feedback from pilot counties as a result of the system determination, errors due to misapplication of policy are being avoided.

- Simplified reporting will be expanded to all households except migrant/seasonal farm workers and households with no earned income and all adult members are elderly/disabled. This policy change will be implemented in January 2003. This policy change will reduce the number of changes in household circumstance required to be reported and the number of interim actions needed. This should reduce the workload and better allow the worker to focus on obtaining accurate information at application.

- Conduct in-person meetings with county/area management staff prior to conversion to FAMIS. These meetings are being scheduled according to the conversion schedule. We are meeting with counties at least 60 days prior to conversion. During the course of these meetings we are discussing payment accuracy issues including the need to accurately determine and key income amounts into the system.

Monitoring/Evaluation:

- QA staff will review cases quarterly for every Big 16 county as well as a sampling of smaller counties. A wide variety of data will be collected in these case reviews. This information will be used to identify problem areas in addition to allowing us to monitor the effective implementation of policy changes and corrective actions.

- QA staff will conduct two county/area office reviews. The review process will include observation of several interactive interviews as well as review of case file information.

Information from these reviews will be used to determine the impact of FAMIS implementation for the Food Stamp Program. It will also be used to develop review criteria specific to budgeting of earned income to be used in other county offices.

- QA staff will collect and analyze data in selected county offices to better define the problem of not verifying wage information. This information will be used to evaluate policy and training needs

Food Stamp Interviews

Information obtained through Quality Control error conferences indicate ineffective or lack of interviewing is a statewide problem that contributes to Missouri's error rate. In FFY 2002 year to date (October, 2001 through May, 2002) QC transmitted 124 positive error cases in which:

- 29, or 23 percent, of the error cases did not have an interview,
- 10 of the 29 errors could have potentially been avoided with a thorough interview.

Quarterly case reading findings support the importance of thorough interviews in payment accuracy. During the first quarter of FFY 2002 (October, November, December) 624 cases were read with 54 of these cases containing potential dollar errors. Twenty, or 37 percent, of the error cases did not have an interview. Of the 20 errors that did not have an interview, potentially all 20 could have been avoided with a thorough interview.

Errors included:

- not budgeting all income or incorrect income amount budgeted,
- change in income not acted on,
- not identifying available resource,
- not budgeting all allowable deductions.

Analysis of the data collected indicates that the corrective actions taken have been only moderately effective in addressing the problem. An unacceptably high percentage of error cases did not have an interview conducted with the applicant. While data collected does not show conclusively that an interview with the applicant would have prevented the error, it does support that it is a contributing factor. Information needed to accurately determine eligibility and benefit amount most certainly is not obtained unless there is effective communication with the customer.

Action Taken:

- Nine Division of Family Service counties have piloted moving the Food Stamp Program to FAMIS. Staff using FAMIS conduct interactive interviews. The interactive interview process is a major change in doing business. Staff has expressed surprised by the additional information the customer is providing. The process is working smoothly and empowers the worker to provide much better customer service.

- Discussions during the Quality Control error conferences included the type of interviews conducted specific to each error case. In these discussions a determination as to if a more thorough interview might have prevented the error was made. Emphasizing the importance of effective and interactive interviewing was a focus of these discussions.

- Quarterly conferences were conducted throughout the year with QA, area and county administration staff. Food stamp payment accuracy issues included the importance of

effective and interactive client interviews. Another topic of discussion was preparation for conversion to FAMIS

- A change in the interview policy was implemented with memorandum IM-197 which was effective November 1, 2001 requiring an in-person or a telephone interview for all food stamp applications. The memo covering this change also provided clarification on scheduling an interview.

- A new food stamp case reading process was developed and trained to all front line supervisors. The process requires supervisors to observe one interview quarterly for each experienced worker to identify interview techniques that if improved, could decrease payment errors. Implementation of this process was complete in May 2001.

- Customer service training, provided in 2001, included interactive interviewing pointers to help a worker complete a thorough interview.

Proposed Action:

- Complete conversion of the Food Stamp Program to FAMIS. Statewide rollout will begin in January 2003 and will be completed by September 2003. The system requires an interactive interview to complete the application process. This should facilitate better exchange between the applicant and worker of information regarding the eligibility unit circumstances. The system determines eligibility and benefit amount based on information that is entered. The applicants like the interactive interview. They can follow along as the worker types in information and may correct or add as they go through each question. We anticipate the interactive interview process will have a significant impact on our payment accuracy. With full implementation of FAMIS the problems associated with not conducting interviews will be eliminated.

- Program and Policy, QC, QA and area and county staffs will continue to participate in QC error conferences. A conference is scheduled for each error case prior to transmitting the findings. QA staff will collect specific data regarding the root cause of the error to use in identifying trends and actions that could be taken. These error conferences facilitate communication between the parties participating in the conferences. With improved communication we hope to fine-tune and improve understanding of policy and procedures.

- Conduct in-person meetings with county/area management staff prior to conversion to FAMIS. These meetings are being scheduled according to the conversion schedule. We are meeting with counties at least 60 days prior to conversion. During the course of these meetings we are discussing payment accuracy issues including the change to interactive interviewing.

Monitoring/Evaluation:

- QA staff will use information collected from QC error conferences to complete an in-depth analysis of interviewing deficiencies' impact on payment accuracy. This information will be used to evaluate policy and training needs.

- QA staff will survey supervisors to determine whether they are observing interviews and information obtained is being used. This information will be discussed during conferences with area and county administrative staff.

- QA staff will collect and analyze data regarding effective interviewing in selected county offices by observing application interviews. This information will be used to evaluate policy and training needs.

Expedited Food Stamp Benefits

Correct identification and timely delivery of expedited food stamp benefits for eligible food stamps households has been an ongoing priority for Missouri. All areas have met the performance expectations for correct identification of expedited eligible households and timely delivery of expedited benefits for federal fiscal year 2002 year to date. We will continue to monitor management reports and collect information through case reviews. We do not though consider this to be an open problem and have developed no specific action plans.

Action Taken:

- Memorandum IM-219 effective January 1, 2002, eliminated screening recertification applications for expedited services. Only initial applications including second month applications are screened for expedited service eligibility. This change in policy greatly decreased the number of households that had to be screened for expedited benefits which could attribute to all areas meeting or exceeding performance measure expectations for expedited services.

- Conversion of the Food Stamp Program to FAMIS was piloted in August 2002 and since that time several other counties have been converted. It is expected the entire state will be converted by September 2003. Once the Food Stamp Program is completely converted to FAMIS identification of expedited eligible applicants will be determined in the system.

Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs)

Misapplication of the ABAWD policy along with staff not updating the Food Stamp Work Requirement (FTWR) screen are problems that have been sighted from food stamp case reviews. Cases with disqualified ABAWDs were selected for review from 8 counties to determine if the disqualification was correctly applied. Of the 133 cases read, 80 (60 percent) were determined to be correct and 53 (40 percent) incorrect.

The incorrect application of the ABAWD policy is an issue in all seven geographic areas. The following chart identifies in which counties the top five error problems were found.

Counties	Received More Than Six Months	Exempt Due to Child Under 18	Not Given Six Months of Eligibility	Did Not Consider All Non-work Months Used	Exempt Due to Medical Condition
Boone	2				
Cape Girardeau	3				
Clay		1	1		1
Jackson	8	3	2	1	1
Jefferson	1	1	1		
Scott	1		1	2	
St. Charles	1	2			
St. Louis County	2	3	1	3	3

Action Taken:

- Nine Division of Family Service counties have piloted moving the Food Stamp Program to FAMIS. FAMIS is designed to guide the worker through the appropriate questions to determine the eligibility unit's eligibility and benefit amount for food stamps. Questions designed to collect data regarding non-work months will appear in the flow when an eligibility unit includes an ABAWD. Though workers still must know policy and enter data correctly, FAMIS should help to reduce the number of errors associated with this policy.

- Quarterly conferences were conducted throughout the year with QA, area and county administration staff. Food stamp payment accuracy issues included discussion of correct application of ABAWD policy and use of FTWR. Another topic of discussion was preparation for conversion to FAMIS

- During FFY 2002 the following memorandums regarding ABAWD policy were issued:

⇒ IM-191 (10/23/01) Change in the Number of Non-work Months and Counties Exempted From Work Requirement Due to 15% Exemption,
⇒ IM-194 (10/24/01) Changes to Work Requirements for ABAWDs,
⇒ IM-31 (03/13/02) Counties Waived from Meeting the 18 to 50 Year Old Requirement.

Proposed Action:

- Complete conversion of the Food Stamp Program to FAMIS. Statewide rollout will begin in January 2003 and will be completed by September 2003.

- Program and Policy, QC, QA and area and county staffs will continue to participate in QC error conferences. QA staff will collect specific data regarding the root cause of the error to use in identifying trends and actions that could be taken. These error conferences facilitate communication between the parties participating in the conferences. With improved communication we hope to fine-tune and improve understanding of policy and procedures.

- Conduct in-person meetings with county/area management staff prior to conversion to FAMIS. During the course of these meetings we are discussing payment accuracy issues.

Monitoring/Evaluation:

- QA staff will review cases quarterly for every Big 16 county as well as a sampling of smaller counties. A wide variety of data will be collected in these case reviews. This information will be used to identify problem areas in addition to allowing us to monitor the effective implementation of policy changes.

- QA staff will conduct two county/area office reviews. The review process will include observation of several interactive interviews as well as review of case file information. Information from these reviews will be used to determine the impact of FAMIS implementation for the Food Stamp Program. The first review will be in December 2002. The second review is tentatively scheduled for May 2003.

- QA staff will collect and analyze data specific to ABAWD policy in selected county offices. In addition QA staff will continue to analyze information collected from QC error conferences. This information will be used to evaluate policy and training needs.

Family Assistance Management Information System (FAMIS)

The Food Stamp Program is being added to the Family Assistance Management Information System (FAMIS). The pilot phase was completed in December 2002. The new FAMIS system will increase work efficiency, streamline the application process, improve client satisfaction, and help the Division reduce its Food Stamp Program error rate. We will complete a county office review of one pilot county to evaluate the impact of implementing FAMIS on business practices. Our goal is to ensure accuracy and timely processing of eligibility determinations while maintaining good customer service as we make the transformation to FAMIS.

Action Taken:

- Area meetings have been conducted statewide for the sole purpose of discussing issues and concerns of area and county staff in relation to FAMIS. Meetings have included representatives from FAMIS pilot counties to share their personal experience during conversion and offer suggestions that hopefully will ease conversion to FAMIS for other county staff.

- Quarterly conferences were conducted throughout the year with QA, area and county administration staff. A topic of discussion was preparation for conversion to FAMIS

- Training is being conducted for administrative, supervisory and front-line staffs. The training is a 38-hour session on determining food stamp eligibility and benefit amount using the FAMIS system. The training incorporates hands-on experience in using the system. The training also provides flow charts and other information to help the worker navigate the system.

- Food Stamp Program and Policy staff developed user guides to assist staff in using the system to correctly determine eligibility and issue benefits. The user guides target specific types of actions such as transferring an individual or eligibility unit to another county office or within a county office.

- DFS, at central and local offices, began preparing staff for the transition of the Food Stamp Program to FAMIS in FFY 2001. Distance learning is being used to provide training on basic skills needed to use FAMIS. The training unit has produced seven Sneak Previews (of FAMIS), sent to all staff via the Intranet. Sneak Previews show staff the principal FAMIS screens and teach them how to use the screens. Take 10s are short on-line lessons covering policy and conversion implementation issues.

- The training unit developed the *Supervisor's Guide-FAMIS Fundamentals*. It was distributed during supervisor management training in early 2001. The guide provides supervisors with the information necessary to prepare staff for FAMIS. It covers three general subjects:
  - $\Rightarrow$ FAMIS Fundamentals,
  - $\Rightarrow$ Implementation, and
  - $\Rightarrow$ Post-Implementation.

- Each area was provided copies of the *Mavis Beacon* typing tutorial. It is available to any staff who needs to improve their typing skills in preparation for using a more automated system.

- In autumn 2001, the training unit tested all the supervisors, self-sufficiency case managers and income maintenance caseworkers in the state to determine the effectiveness of the on-line training packages. The average score was 83.58 percent correct. Of the 2,245 people tested, 490 scored 100 percent, the highest score and 2 scored 15 percent, the lowest score. The most common score was 100 percent.

Proposed Action:

- Complete conversion of the Food Stamp Program to FAMIS. Statewide rollout will begin in January 2003 and will be completed by September 2003.

- Continue to develop user guides to assist staff in completing specific types of actions. These guides will be completed and available to staff by May 2003.

- Develop clerical guide to be used by supervisory staff to train clerical on how to use FAMIS. The guide is projected to be complete and available on the Intranet in January 2003.

- Complete development of FAMIS supervisor/management training. This training is in the form of distance learning. The training package will be completed in January 2003. The first training is to be presented to the supervisors and managers in the pilot counties in February 2003.

- Complete county office review of Butler County (pilot county) to evaluate impact of FAMIS implementation on office procedures. The review was initiated in December 2002 by visiting the county office to collect data. Analysis of data collected and the review report will be completed in January 2003.

Monitoring/Evaluation:

- QA staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the clerical training package by interviewing clerical staff.

- Administrative staff will evaluate the effectiveness of supervisor/management training.

- QA staff will observe interactive interviews to collect data specific to error problem areas.

Claims Management

A review of the claims process in Missouri previously identified issues with writing all claims and timely processing of potential claims. QA staff monitored through case reviews claims being referred/registered on the date discovered as well as 90% timely establishment of claim referrals.

All seven areas are prompt with establishing claims and starting collection on overpayments. The new CARS system has improved the speed and consistency of claim establishment. We will continue to monitor management reports and collect information through case reviews. We do not though consider this to be an open problem and have developed no specific action plans.

Action Taken:

- Information regarding performance measures associated with claims processing was discussed during the quarterly conference meetings.

- Missouri developed a plan for establishing and collecting claims. As a result, system and policy changes were implemented effective August 2001 for food stamp claims establishment. The following memorandums were issued to staff advising them of the new policy and system changes for referral, establishment, and collection of claims.

    ⇒ IM-#63, 03/29/2001, "Expunged Food Stamp Benefits and Claim Reduction";
    ⇒ IM-#92, 05/10/2001, "CARS Screens Changes";
    ⇒ IM-#117, 06/26/2001, "Terminating Food Stamp Claims";
    ⇒ IM-#122, 07/02/2001, "Trafficking Food Stamp Claims";
    ⇒ IM-#144, 08/03/2001, "Food Stamp Claim Procedures";
    ⇒ IM-#146, 08/03/2001, "Food Stamp Claim Policy Revision";
    ⇒ IM-#147, 08/03/2001, "CARS Demand Letter Policy";
    ⇒ IM-#151, 08/08/2001, "CARS Screens";
    ⇒ IM-#162, 09/04/2001, "Pending Claim Referral Timeliness";
    ⇒ IM-#179, 09/27/2001, "Claim Payments";
    ⇒ IM-#180, 09/27/2001, "CARS Updates/Clarification";
    ⇒ IM-#183, 10/02/2001, "CARS-1/1A Instructions";
    ⇒ IM-#220, 12/18/2001, "CARS Clarification";
    ⇒ IM-#1,   01/03/2002, "CARS Updates – Food Stamps"; and
    ⇒ IM-#2,   01/03/2002, "Registering Food Stamp Claims"

- A series of reports are issued weekly, monthly and quarterly to county, area and central office staffs to facilitate timely processing of claim referrals.

- A training package, *Food Stamp Claims Policy and Procedures*, was developed and made available on the Intranet September 17, 2001 for supervisors to present to staff. This training reinforces the plan for referral, establishment and collection of claims. Also included with

the training is an on-line course, *Claims Accounting and Restitution System (CARS) Test Drive* for staff to become familiar with the new on-line system.

- To ensure potential claims from QC errors are referred QC staffs register the claim referral on the Discovery Add screen. A statement that the claim referral is registered is added to the end of comments section of the IM-210 "Report of Quality Assurance Review" form. Memorandum IM-#180, dated September 27, 2001, discussed this new procedure.