



State of Missouri

2017 Governor's Award for Quality and Productivity

Executive Summary

Project or Team Name: Special Investigations Unit (Division of Senior & Disability Services)

Nominator: David Lanigan

Nominating Department: (Nominations must include names of all agencies/departments/organizations/businesses, etc.)

Department of Health & Senior Services

Category: Efficiency/Process Improvement

Executive Summary: (Executive Summary page must be 500 words or less, 12 point, Times New Roman font, and left justified. **Attach the Executive Summary to the front of the nomination.**)

The adult protective services industry is a social services industry designed to protect vulnerable adults who are elderly or disabled. As more vulnerable adults become victims of abuse, neglect and exploitation by caregivers in an official capacity, there is more focus on holding the perpetrators accountable for their actions. The task of investigating and holding perpetrators accountable was added to the already full plate of adult protective services workers, who were primarily responsible for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of vulnerable adults. This was not particularly effective for a couple reasons: Investigations require a special skill set and knowledge of laws and norms that everyone does not have. Also, adult protective service workers have competing interests of focusing on a victim's needs while trying to prepare a complex criminal case for prosecution and/or an Employee Disqualification List (EDL) case.

Like most states, Missouri was struggling with preparing investigations that would stand up in court or hearings. When investigations cannot stand up in court or hearings, the result is that perpetrators are able to continue working in the industry, victimizing Missouri's most vulnerable citizens. Providers and mandated reporters lose faith in the system, and as a result, some of them may stop reporting because they feel that no action will be taken regarding their reports. This is especially concerning, given that often times, perpetrators work multiple jobs in the industry -- abusing, neglecting, or exploiting vulnerable adults in their own homes, nursing homes, or hospital settings.

DHSS' response to these concerns was to make specialized investigators to focus on adult abuse and neglect investigations, including EDL investigations. The plan was to place these investigators in the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) where the focus would be on the perpetrator rather than the victim. By changing the process, DHSS could help ensure that perpetrators would be prevented from continuing to victimize elderly and disabled persons.

Challenges in implementing this process included that it was different than the industry had always done things, there was no money to create a new investigation unit, and the entire division (Senior and Disability Services) was arranged to focus on adult protective services for victims rather than to focus on conducting investigations of suspected perpetrators. Because of the victim-centered focus, the division's case management system was not ideal for use in investigations. A final challenge was rebuilding relationships with providers and law enforcement.

With experienced criminal investigators supervising and training the new investigators, the results were immediate. During the last full year of the old process, only 19 percent of investigations were deemed legally sufficient to act upon. However, during the first fiscal year of this new process, 99.5 percent of investigations were deemed legally sufficient to act upon. Moreover, the department has prevailed in every EDL case that has

been appealed since the new process began. Further, relationships with providers, law enforcement, and other state agencies has improved. Team morale and turnover rates have also improved. Finally, these investigations have identified an estimated \$1 million dollars worth of fraudulent Medicaid claims the state is eligible to recover.



State of Missouri – 2017 Governor’s Award for Quality and Productivity

NOMINATION FORM

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Department: Health & Senior Services

1. **Project or team name:** Special Investigations Unit (Division of Senior & Disability Services)
2. **List the name of all team members, job titles, state agency department, and/or other organizations including public, private sector or business:** *(Please list alphabetically by last name – 2 to 20 team members maximum.)*
1. Greg Backers, Investigator III, DHSS, SIU/DSDS
 2. Amy Beussink, Investigator II, DHSS, SIU/DSDS
 3. Jerry Greene, Investigator II, DHSS, SIU/DSDS
 4. Dixie Hall, Investigator II, DHSS, SIU/DSDS
 5. EJ Jackson, Investigator III, DHSS, SIU/DSDS
 6. David Lanigan, Investigations Manager, DHSS, SIU/DSDS
 7. Jennifer Moppin, Investigator II, DHSS, SIU/DSDS
 8. Marsha Patrickus, AOSA, DHSS, SIU/DSDS
 9. Sarah Pfitzner, Investigator II, DHSS, SIU/DSDS
 10. Jessica Phelps, Investigator II, DHSS, SIU/DSDS
 11. Julie Pleimann, Investigator II, DHSS, SIU/DSDS
 12. Jamie Roe, Investigator II, DHSS, SIU/DSDS
 13. Will Spencer, Investigator II, DHSS, SIU/DSDS
 14. Mindy Sweezer, Investigator III, DHSS, SIU/DSDS
 15. Christy Thorp, Investigator II, DHSS, SIU/DSDS

3. **Nomination Category:** *(Check only one.)*

☐ INNOVATION

☐ CUSTOMER SERVICE

☒ EFFICIENCY / PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

4. **Explain why you selected this category:**

The project was innovative in that it improved an existing process and delivered benefits to the citizens of Missouri. It also improved customer service to our citizens and stakeholders. However, the project's primary intent was to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of investigations. The process improvements achieved that, and they also improved working relationships with other state agencies, providing them with opportunities to recover fraudulent claims worth millions of dollars.

II. BACKGROUND

1. **When did the team begin its work?**

March 2016.

2. **What date did the team initiate the implementation phase of the project?**

May 2016.

3. Is the project:

☐ Time Limited

☐ Completed

☒ Ongoing

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Why was the project necessary?

Personal care aides/attendants who were abusing/neglecting their clients, stealing from their clients, or falsifying documentation to receive Medicaid payments for services they did not provide, were not being held accountable for their actions. Many personal care providers would terminate the aides/attendants, but those same aides/attendants would go to work for other providers and continue to victimize elderly and disabled people or continue to commit Medicaid fraud. Providers were frustrated with the lack of accountability. Further, more than 80 percent of the cases that were investigated by the field were deemed legally insufficient to pursue.

The reason for these issues was that these cases were being investigated by staff who do not have an investigative background. The focus in the adult protective services industry is on the victim, and the same adult protective services workers focusing on the victim were expected to also conduct an investigation that would hold up in a criminal prosecution or Employee Disqualification List (EDL) appeal. This is the industry norm for Adult Protective Services nationally.

2. What were the primary goals of the project? *(150 words or less.)*

To improve the quality of the investigations; to improve efficiency of the investigative process by reducing redundant, unnecessary tasks; to build relationships with providers; to improve relationships with sister state agencies; to improve morale; and to ensure perpetrators were placed on the EDL to prevent further violations.

3. Describe the project: *(200 words or less.)*

Ten positions were reallocated from the Bureau of Home and Community Services (BHCS) to the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) as an Investigator II's. The Investigator II's were supervised by experienced criminal investigators. The idea was that investigators should be supervised by people who have extensive criminal investigative experience and could provide more focus on criminal procedures and standards. In doing so, the focus of the investigation became the suspect as opposed to the victim, which had historically been the case. (The victims were still being attended to by the BHCS).

The case management system was updated to be more suitable for investigations. Layers of reviewers were removed and the experienced supervisor became the sole reviewer. Investigative processes were streamlined and updated to be in line with standard investigative practices, which ensured increased efficiency. On the job and outside training was provided. The entire focus of the investigative process changed. Once the focus changed and the quality of investigations improved, all of the cases were deemed legally sufficient to pursue.

4. What technology, if any, was used in the development, implementation, maintenance or measurement of the project? *(150 words or less.)*

The established case management system used to track hotlines was updated to focus on the suspect. Different processes were expanded to ensure appropriate tracking of cases. This was instrumental in ensuring cases did not "fall through the cracks."

Each investigator was assigned a digital recorder to record their interviews. This helps reduce the number of appeals. It also helps clarify the context of statements made.

Each investigator was also provided a phone cord for connecting their digital recorder to their desk phone. This

allows the investigator to handle minor cases quickly and cost effectively instead of traveling to conduct interviews.

5. Explain how the accomplishment of the team exceeds its regular duties and responsibilities.

(150 words or less.)

The individuals comprising the team were faced with a significant challenge in trying to revamp the processes followed by DSDS staff to complete investigations of potential abuse, neglect or exploitation of seniors and persons with disabilities. They had no extra funding, so all of their efforts had to be accomplished with existing resources. That meant they had to work overtime hours to complete the tasks of the team while continuing to complete all of their regular, very demanding duties. They began by researching the issue to better understand the problem and its cause(s). The team assembled data demonstrating DSDS performance and charted the current processes to determine where problems existed and where efficiencies could be achieved. Team members also consulted closely with stakeholder groups to gather suggestions for improvements to existing processes. A new policy manual was created and specialized training materials were developed for use by field staff. All field staff were brought to the central office to review the new procedures.

6. Which of the following describes the intended benefits of the project? (Check all that apply and provide an explanation. - 150 words or less)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| ☒ Cost Reduction | ☒ Time Savings | ☒ Increased Effectiveness |
| ☒ Improved Process | ☒ Other: Describe | |

Better quality; improved morale; reduced turnover (which also leads to cost reduction); and good relationships with providers, law enforcement, and sister agencies.

IV. RESULTS / MEASUREMENT

1. Explain how the success of the project was measured and what outcomes were achieved. (Explanation should not exceed 300-500 words.)

In calendar year 2015, only 19 percent of cases investigated and believed to be substantiated were deemed legally sufficient to pursue. For FY 2017 (the first full year of the new process), 99.5 percent of cases were deemed legally sufficient to pursue. In FY 2017, 221 cases were completed by 10 investigators, as opposed to 237 adult protective and community workers who completed 29 cases the year before. This shows the quality of investigations has greatly improved.

Although there are no numbers to show the number of cases appealed and lost prior to the new process, DHSS has not lost a single EDL case on appeal since the new process began.

In FY 2016, SIU had a 28 percent turnover rate. For FY 2017, SIU had no turnover, which leads to investigators being more efficient, more knowledgeable, and reduces costs.

The average SIU investigator spends \$141 less per month on travel expenses than they did when they worked in the BHCS because they are able to do more work by phone. With the reduced travel, they are able to complete more investigations. In FY 2017, these ten investigators worked 1,656 investigations. Additional cost savings comes from the reduced amount of time DHSS legal counsel spends on appeals.

Most of the 221 substantiated cases involved Medicaid fraud, so they were given to Missouri Medicaid Audit and Compliance (MMAC). It used our investigative reports to recoup the fraudulent claims. MMAC cannot provide an exact amount of recoveries that resulted from our investigations. However, the eligible recoveries is estimated to be over \$1 million.

While a number cannot be put on it, SIU frequently hears from providers about how much they appreciate this

new process and how their faith in the system is restored. Law enforcement agencies have also complimented the quality of the investigations since the new process was implemented.

SIU received the Investigative Unit of the Year award from the Missouri Investigator's Association.

2. Are the benefits derived from this project: (Check only one.)

☒ Recurring ☐ One-time

3. If recurring, how will the benefits be sustained? (Explain in 150 words or less.)

The team was developed for the sole purpose of conducting these investigations. The team will continue to be supervised by experienced criminal investigators and will continue to receive training as their careers progress. The longer they are in their positions, the more experience they receive and the better their investigations will be. The quality and efficiency of the investigations should continue improving.

V. RECOGNITION / AWARDS

1. Has this project previously been nominated for the Governor's Award for Quality and Productivity?
If yes, when?

No.

2. If yes, for which category was it nominated?

N/A.

3. Has this project received any other awards or recognition? If yes, describe.

The Missouri State Investigator's Association named SIU the Investigative Unit of the Year (amongst law enforcement, state agencies, and private investigators) for this process.

As stated previously, it is a national norm that adult protective services cases are investigated by social workers. The National Adult Protective Services Association has indicated this process may be presented to other states as a national model since other states are having difficulty substantiating and winning cases. Their report is due to be released later in the year.

Nominating Department: Health & Senior Services

Name: David Lanigan

Signature:

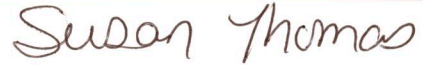


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Department Director's Name:
Randall W. Williams, MD, FACOG

Signature:

