



Digital Imaging Program Fact Sheet January, 2004

A NEW REQUIREMENT

In 1995, Governor Rowland's bipartisan Blue Ribbon Commission on Welfare Fraud concluded its mission with a series of recommendations for reducing welfare fraud in the State of Connecticut. One of the cornerstones of their recommendations was the implementation of a biometric identification system which would deter individuals from attempting to apply for benefits under a fraudulent identity. Legislation was crafted with the intent of ensuring that the limited state funds available for social services programs are spent only on those individuals who legitimately are in need of services and not individuals who attempt to defraud the system by using multiple identities to access state services.

Beginning in January 1996, all applicants for and recipients of AFDC (now TANF) and General Assistance are digitally imaged. Failure to comply with this requirement can result in the termination or reduction of benefits.

WHAT IS DIGITAL IMAGING?

Digital imaging refers to a computer technology that uses scanned graphical information for positive identification purposes. For DSS purposes, digital imaging means taking a computer scan of an individual's 2 index fingers and capturing an applicant's photo and signature for purposes of multiple case fraud detection.

HOW DOES DIGITAL IMAGING PREVENT WELFARE FRAUD?

Digital images are created for every new and existing welfare recipient. These images are stored in a computer database. A digital image is then taken for each subsequent applicant. This prevents duplicate issuances.

These images are then automatically matched against the established database. Applicants who previously have applied for assistance are then detected through matched fingerprints.

WHAT KINDS OF EQUIPMENT ARE USED?

Standard desktop personal computers (PCs) are used to gather the information. All of the PCs are linked to a statewide network that has been established specifically for this system. An optical scan finger print reader, which is a device the size of a small tissue box, scans the applicant's two index fingers. A small camera attached to the PC captures the client's picture and a digital tablet captures their signature when needed. An attached printer issues completed photo ID card for active recipients within 3 to 5 minutes or the card may be issued at a later date.

Enrollment workstations are located in DSS regional offices.

IS DIGITAL IMAGING AN INVASION OF PRIVACY?

Courts have ruled that non-law enforcement digital imaging is not an invasion of privacy. Currently, Texas, Colorado and California capture a fingerprint for state driver's licenses.

WHAT DO WELFARE RECIPIENTS THINK OF DIGITAL IMAGING?

An independent study of AFDC recipients participating in the Los Angeles, California AFIRM program, by the auditing firm Ernst & Young, showed that 97% of those interviewed found no objection to the digital imaging process. Connecticut clients accept it well, also.

DOES DIGITAL IMAGING WORK?

In the early implementation years, estimates of savings exceeded nine million dollars. In today's mature system, quantification of savings is not possible. This is because the system works and everyone in CT knows it. Thus, people who would be tempted to "double dip" are affectively deterred.

Every month, the department "images" approximately 1,850 people. Of these a handful require further scrutiny. We know anecdotally that some people stop the application.

In a recent news article one applicant moved from California where they have digital imaging to Hawaii where they don't.

THE FUTURE OF BIOMETRIC IDENTIFICATION

There are several different types of biometric identification being used around the world. All of these are possible because of increased computing power. Examples include eye and retinal scanning, palm prints, signatures, voice recognition and others in varying stages of development.

In this post 9/11 world such uses are expected to increase dramatically. To keep up with this burgeoning technology see www.biometriewatch.com .