



*Connecticut Department of Social Services*

**Information from Commissioner Roderick L. Bremby  
About DSS Service Modernization Progress**

**August 26, 2013**

The Department of Social Services' 'ConneCT' customer service modernization initiative is nearing the two-month point of operations after statewide launch on July 8. I intend to provide regular updates through online postings, media interviews and other measures as we go forward with implementation of this monumental initiative.

DSS is now available online ([www.connect.ct.gov](http://www.connect.ct.gov)) and by phone (1-855-6-CONNECT), around the clock, for clients to open benefit accounts and check on their eligibility status. During business hours, 12 service centers are open to the public, with Benefit Center staff available through the new interactive voice-response phone system.

While we are seeing an overall improvement in access to the department and our services by many thousands of Connecticut residents, we are also experiencing the perhaps inevitable growing pains of a major business process transformation.

To date, more than 26,000 DSS clients have created online benefit accounts. Nearly 41,000 phone benefit accounts have also been opened. We have also begun centralized document intake, scanning and electronic transmission to end the tidal wave of literally millions of pages of applications, redetermination forms and other documents flooding our offices. Hundreds of thousands of pages have already been scanned and inputted for DSS processing. In the planning stage is the launch of online applications and change reporting, scheduled for this fall.

As evidenced by the achievements noted above, each of these systematic and structural changes enhance our ability to do our work better. But as we celebrate our successes we are aware of areas in our service delivery model that require us to rethink the process and make additional changes.

Specifically, I am most concerned with two factors. The document intake, scanning and electronic transmission process is bending under the weight of the sheer volume of documents

received and the wait time to reach a Benefit Center worker has increased to an unacceptable level. While these issues are not mutually exclusive, problems in workflow at the scanning center affect the ability of DSS workers statewide to receive and work on applications and renewals on their computer screens, and to advise clients of the current situation. This results in lengthier and more frequent calls both which negatively impact wait times. So it is absolutely vital that we continue to address both of these issues immediately and simultaneously.

In general, however, the launch of DSS service modernization has been an extremely positive step. Previously, it was frequently impossible for DSS clients to reach workers at all through 12 obsolete and overwhelmed local phone systems, and there was no online or phone access to benefit accounts. Nearing the two-month point of Connect implementation, nearly 400,000 calls have been handled through the new Interactive Voice Response phone system, with thousands of clients getting the information they need from online or phone interactive voice-response systems without needing to speak to a worker. A new service eligibility pre-screening tool is also assisting clients and potential applicants at [www.connect.ct.gov](http://www.connect.ct.gov).

While not understating the challenges implicit in massive system change, it is important also to recognize the overall improvement in client access to the Department of Social Services to date. We will continue to attack service issues as we move this system forward over the coming weeks and months. In the meantime, I thank our dedicated DSS staff and partners who are working so hard to bring enhanced customer service and systems to Connecticut residents.

—Rod Bremby