

# Bulletin

January 4, 2007

Minnesota Department of Human Services ■ 444 Lafayette Rd. ■ St. Paul, MN 55155

**OF INTEREST TO**

- County Directors
- Chairperson, County Board of Commissioners
- County Supervisors and Staff
  - Child Care
  - Fiscal
  - Income Maintenance
- Child Care Administrative Contact
- Tribal Representatives

**ACTION**

Please read and respond by January 19, 2007.

**EXPIRATION DATE**

January 4, 2009

## Implementation of Statewide Minnesota Electronic Child Care (MEC<sup>2</sup>) System Mentor Program

**TOPIC**

Statewide MEC<sup>2</sup> System Mentor Program.

**PURPOSE**

To provide counties with information for the statewide MEC<sup>2</sup> Mentor Program; request that counties notify the Department of Human Services (DHS) if the county is interested in having a mentor; and advise counties of DHS's intention to recognize mentors as the primary means of working with counties to support their MEC<sup>2</sup> users.

**CONTACT**

Brenda Hennek, MEC<sup>2</sup> County Support  
Transition to Economic Stability Division (TES)  
PO Box 64951  
St. Paul, MN 55164-0951  
651-431-4059 [brenda.hennek@state.mn.us](mailto:brenda.hennek@state.mn.us)

**SIGNED**

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CHARLES E. JOHNSON  
Assistant Commissioner  
Children and Family Services

### **Introduction and background**

Forty four counties are using the current MEC<sup>2</sup> system. MEC<sup>2</sup> is short for Minnesota Electronic Child Care. DHS is in the process of reengineering the current MEC<sup>2</sup> system to create a stable, accurate, and reliable statewide computer system to support the Child Care Assistance Program and pay child care providers. This project is called MEC<sup>2</sup> Integration. It builds on the mature MAXIS system, but will look more like a web site.

When this retooled MEC<sup>2</sup> goes statewide October 1, 2007 and enters the implementation stage to the new integrated MEC<sup>2</sup> system, there is a need to address ongoing direct user support. Conversion of providers will begin August 1, 2007.

The MAXIS system has a mentor program that plays an extremely valuable role in providing on-site support to county MAXIS users. In addition, mentors have served as one of the principal links between DHS and county users. The successes of the mentor program has led DHS to recognize that strengthening and expanding the mentor program to MEC<sup>2</sup> users would be beneficial to DHS and to the counties. Mentors will play a crucial role in communication, facilitation and organization during implementation/conversion and ongoing case maintenance.

### **Benefits of a Mentor Program**

The department believes that the expansion of the mentor program would benefit both county agencies and DHS in the same manner that the program has benefited MAXIS users.

Mentors will not be expected to assist other counties, unless individual counties choose to make arrangements to share mentors.

Benefits to county agencies include:

1. Viewing system functionality and the GUI (Graphical User Interface) environment prior to implementation by participating in system testing.
2. Consistent, well-trained, on-site support.
3. Expertise to solve more problems in-house, without having to access the TSS Help Desk.
4. A special security role which would allow the mentor view access to Status History to troubleshoot and resolve case-related problems that previously required a call to the Help Desk.
5. Regular meetings to update mentors on the most recent policy and MEC<sup>2</sup> system changes as well as upcoming changes. These meetings would also allow mentors to establish face-to-face relationships with DHS staff and other mentors.

Benefits to the Department include:

1. Testing with real users to have system production ready.
2. Presentation of consistent updated information to all counties at the same time.
3. Communication from users on needed changes and enhancements.
4. Direct feedback on proposed changes and enhancements.
5. Quality implementation of system updates and consistent policy application.

### **DHS Role in the Mentor Program**

DHS will establish the framework to support mentors and their efforts to provide direct on-site support to mentors including:

1. Training for mentor role.
2. Regularly scheduled mentor meetings (may initially be monthly).
3. Expanding mentors' access to security roles that will assist them in the performance of their responsibilities as mentors.
4. Handouts.
5. Networking opportunities with other counties and
6. Direct access to MEC<sup>2</sup> County Support Coordinator and Help Desk staff.

During the implementation phase of the mentor program, the Department's goal is to have each county identify one mentor. Counties who are interested in having more than one mentor may submit their request through, Brenda Hennek, MEC<sup>2</sup> mentor coordinator, at [brenda.hennek@state.mn.us](mailto:brenda.hennek@state.mn.us).

### **County Agency Role in the Mentor Program**

In order to participate in the mentor program counties must demonstrate a commitment to making the program a success. This includes agreeing that:

1. Each county will internally discuss and develop a plan that identifies how the county intends to address the ongoing support needs of its MEC<sup>2</sup> users. This plan should specifically identify the areas that the mentor will or will not have responsibility for, and should also identify other county staff who have MEC<sup>2</sup> support responsibilities. A County

User Support Planning Worksheet has been developed for use in identifying and discussing support needs. A copy of this worksheet has been attached for your reference.

2. Identify its mentor(s) and submit a Mentor Designation Form for direct correspondence and communication needs.
3. Each mentor will attend regularly scheduled mentor meetings via videoconference. Two meetings a year may be in-person. Initial mentor training will occur prior to system implementation. Once implementation is complete a mandatory system training will be required.
4. Each mentor will be responsible for sharing the information received from DHS with co-workers.

As long as these basic requirements are met, counties are encouraged to design a mentor role that meets their individual county needs.

### **How to Select an Effective Mentor**

The process of selecting a mentor is an important step that will determine how effective the mentor will be in your county. The mentor could be a case worker, supervisor, or other staff, as long as that person is familiar with all aspects of MEC<sup>2</sup>, including understanding the flow and maintenance of caseload work, issuance, interfaces, and policy.

The mentor should be a person who is willing and able to “coach” MEC<sup>2</sup> users who need help, rather than just solve the problem at hand. A MEC<sup>2</sup> user’s overall skills should increase as a result of receiving assistance from the mentor.

The mentor should be able to summarize mentor update meeting information; and discuss the information with county managers to determine how this information should be distributed within the agency.

The mentor should possess good communication skills in order to function as the support link between the county and DHS.

### **County Support Mechanisms**

Users will be able to access DHS Systems Information Repository (SIR) for regular updated user support information. SIR is a secure communication tool used by some DHS Service Delivery Systems. The link to the MEC<sup>2</sup> communication pages can be accessed through the top navigation bar on SIR. Key MEC<sup>2</sup> pages will include:

- *System availability information*
- *Announcements*
- *Integration Project Timeline*

- *Statewide Implementation/Conversion Plan*
- *Status Reports*
- *Daily Communication and Updates*
- *Documents and Forms*
- *Mentor Page*
- *User Manual*
- *Links that include but not all inclusive to TrainLink, CCAP Manual*

➡ <https://www.cty.dhs.state.mn.us/default.aspx>

### **Action Required**

Discuss this bulletin with appropriate county staff and management. Review the attached County User Support Planning and Mentor Role Considerations Worksheet and complete the Mentor Designation Form.

### **Registration Information**

If your county decides to participate in the mentor program, register by sending email to Brenda Hennek at [brenda.hennek@state.mn.us](mailto:brenda.hennek@state.mn.us). Include the name of your county, the name of the proposed mentor (if known), phone number and email address of your county mentor planning contact.

### **Special Needs**

This information is available in other forms to people with disabilities by contacting us at (651) 296-4410 (voice), toll free at 1-888-234-1138 or through the Minnesota Relay Service at 1 (800) 627-3529 (TDD), 7-1-1 or 1-877- 627-3848 (speech-to-speech relay service).

## COUNTY USER SUPPORT PLANNING WORKSHEET

This worksheet includes: 1) a list of support activities that should be considered as you make your decision about having a mentor; and 2) a list of questions about the role a mentor might have in your county. These support activities need to be addressed by each county regardless of whether or not a mentor is selected to ensure that county MEC<sup>2</sup> users know who to contact for their internal support needs.

Each county needs to identify the person who will have responsibility for each role. If your county selects a mentor, the mentor may fill some of these roles, while other roles may be more appropriately filled by other county staff.

This list is not all inclusive; each county may have specialized support activities that also need to be addressed. Use this worksheet to discuss each support need, to identify who is responsible for the activity, and to outline how this support will be delivered.

### **Part One: County User Support Planning**

Monitor email for items that have the potential to impact county workflow including monitoring email about new functionality, changes to existing functionality, and system availability.

Responsibility assigned to: \_\_\_\_\_

Provide one-on-one assistance to workers who are having problems with specific cases, or a type of case. What is the preferred process for requesting assistance with these cases? (For example, some counties that have mentors have a sign-up sheet for workers who need time with the mentor.)

Responsibility assigned to: \_\_\_\_\_

Oversight of calls to TSS Help Desk. Some questions that come to the Help Desk could be answered in the county, which would save the time and effort of both the county staff and the Help Desk staff.

Responsibility assigned to: \_\_\_\_\_

Training related issues. Some counties provide internal (often informal) training or workshops on particular aspects of MEC<sup>2</sup> that a number of county users are having trouble with. Who is responsible for identifying areas where additional training would be useful?

Responsibility assigned to: \_\_\_\_\_

Who is responsible for organizing and delivering this additional training?

Responsibility assigned to: \_\_\_\_\_

Orienting new workers in MEC<sup>2</sup>. New workers often feel overwhelmed upon their return from training. Who is the most appropriate person for new workers to contact with basic questions when using MEC?

Responsibility assigned to: \_\_\_\_\_

Who is responsible for receiving and distributing copies of materials from DHS to counties?

Responsibility assigned to: \_\_\_\_\_

Who is responsible for reviewing information from mentor meetings to determine who within the agency needs the information:

Responsibility assigned to: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Part Two: Mentor Role Considerations**

Review and discuss these questions to help define the potential role of a mentor in your county.

1. Should your county have a full time or part time mentor?
2. Should the mentor carry a caseload? If so, should the mentor carry a full or partial caseload?
3. Should the county explore sharing a mentor with surrounding counties? If so, how will information from the mentor update meetings be distributed in each participating county?
4. Will users be required to seek assistance from the mentor before contacting the TSS Help Desk?
5. Will the mentor have any training responsibilities?
6. Should the mentor function as an internal Help Desk, or rather, circulate among users to provide one-on-one assistance?
7. Should the mentor be a caseworker? A supervisor?

## Mentor Designation Form

*Please complete the following information and email or fax by January 19, 2007 to:*

brenda.hennek@state.mn.us

Fax number: 651-431-7419

County \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Mentor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Fax** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email address of Mentor** \_\_\_\_\_

**Form Completed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

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### Additional Mentors

**Mentor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Fax** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mentor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Fax** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email address** \_\_\_\_\_