



MIS Newsletter

November 2010

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OAI

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EMAA

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Terrie Planchock
USCAA

Pat Stinman
OACAC

Robyn Walker
ESC

Sherrie Wohlgenuth
GHC

MACA Staff

Kawajalyn Collins
Systems Administrator
kcollins@communityaction.org

Kurt Brewer
Business Innovations Manager
kbrewer@communityaction.org

From the Statewide System Admin...

What a difference a year makes...

A year ago, we were working under pressure of the new program year and the start of another LIHEAP season. A year ago we were wondering where summer went and why Christmas decorations hit the stores before Halloween. A year ago we were thinking about all the things we would get done so that next year would be different.

OK, so some things may not change from year to year, but others do. A year ago, we were recovering from a difficult upgrade in the MIS software. And while that transition was rough, the road since then has been much smoother.

Since that upgrade, the system has been more stable, we have enjoyed better performance, and we have been able to add a large number of enhancements and suggestions from our users, as well as ongoing system improvements throughout the year. We completed a user satisfaction survey in September, with responses from more than 260 users from across the state. (See page 2.)

Bidding a Fond Farewell...

Kawajalyn Collins has taken a position with a large technology corporation that has recently opened a new facility in mid-Missouri. We are sorry to see Kawajalyn go, but we wish her every success on the next stage of her journey. Good Luck, Kawajalyn!

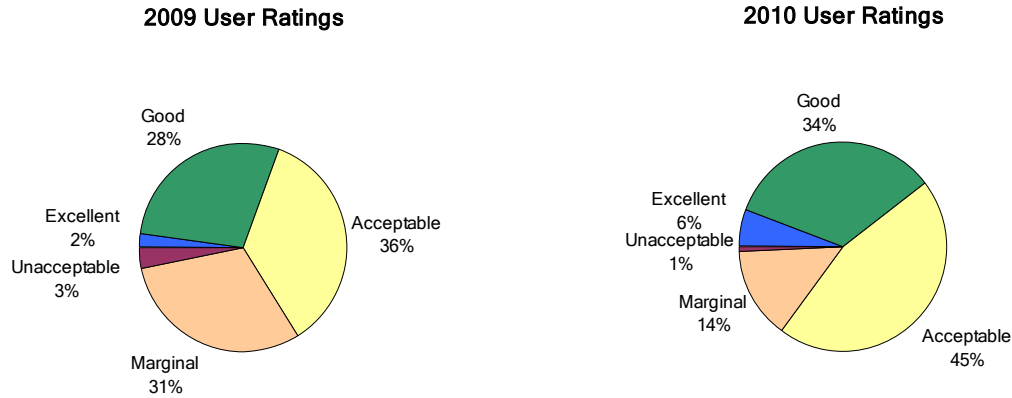
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For more info on the MIS go to <http://www.communityaction.org/MIS.aspx>

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With significant increases in each favorable rating category, the overall approval rating (combined ratings of Acceptable, Good, and Excellent) jumped from 66% to 85%. Here are the results, comparing the December 2009 survey with the September 2010 survey:



We still have much to do as we expand the features and begin to enable agencies to add local programs to the MIS. Much of the success has come from agency efforts to learn the system, and there have been numerous suggestions from CAA users and staff that have improved the software and the user experience.

The next year will bring many new changes, including the AES version 5 software. The new version is fully compatible with the current version, so we will be able to make a gradual transition at our own pace, rather than shutting off the old and starting the new. The options for future enhancements range from completing the ROMA reporting capabilities to scannable intake forms to re-starting efforts to look at the Head Start module, as well as ongoing efforts for new reports, more ad hoc templates, and general improvements from user suggestions.

As we continue to make improvements, it's nice to see that the changes are appreciated by our users. Thanks for all you do helping others, and please keep letting us know how we can help you!

Quote of the Month:

"Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all."

~ Dale Carnegie

Featured MIS Best Practice

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- **LIHEAP/ECIP Reports:** The monthly and year-end reports for LIHEAP/ECIP are built into the MIS, customized for Missouri's needs, and updated to keep pace with program changes and state/federal requirements. Each report described here is a "Management Report" in the MIS that is customized to only include payment activities recorded in the LIHEAP program for each agency. Contact your Agency Admin Team if you need access to these reports, but do not see them in the Management Reports list. For details on any of the following, please see the MIS Resources page or the How To documents page on the MIS pages of the MACA web site at www.communityaction.org/MIS.aspx.
 - **Exhibit B (summary of ECIP payments)**
 - The Exhibit B report shows a summary of payments in the system. The report separates Paid records from Obligated (pending and approved), and also sorts the payments by Fuel Type (Electricity, Propane, Wood, etc.). The Exhibit B shows the payment status as of the ending date of the report parameter. If you run a report on December 10th with a date range of Nov 1 – Nov 30, the report will show you the status of the payment records as of Nov 30th (even if the record was batched and paid on Dec 5th). This provides an accurate account of pledges and payments in each month.
 - The Exhibit B is frequently used in conjunction with the Exhibit E report (see below), which provides a detailed listing of payment records. As long as the report parameters used are identical, the totals of the Exhibit B and Exhibit E should match.
 - The Exhibit B was built as a required monthly report, but can also be useful as a validation report to reconcile with fiscal for check runs (see below).
 - **Exhibit E (detailed payment listing)**
 - The Exhibit E report has two options: Obligated and Paid. Both options show the detailed records of payments based on the status field. The status displayed on the report is the status of the record as of the end date of the report parameters (see the example for the Exhibit B report above).
 - The Paid option lists all records that have been paid (i.e., batched and reconciled in the MIS).
 - The Obligated option includes all records with a status of Pending or Approved (as of the end date of the report parameters).
 - As long as the report parameters are identical, the totals on the Exhibit B report should match the corresponding Exhibit E report (by status and Fuel Type).
 - The Exhibit E can be useful in identifying missing payments, payments made to an incorrect vendor or contract, or other data discrepancies such as the payment amount or fuel type.
 - **Balancing/Reconciling check runs between MIS data and Fiscal dept.**
 - Run the Exhibit B with the date parameters set to equal the check date
 - The totals should match. If not, the sub-totals by Fuel Type should help to quickly identify any discrepancies between what was entered into the MIS, and what was paid by Fiscal.
 - Run the Exhibit E for the same parameters to review specific records and identify the source of any discrepancy, then correct as necessary.

- **Exhibit C (year-end payment listing)**
 - The Exhibit C report provides a detailed listing of all payments made in the program year. Note: Do not print this report unless you are sure the data is correct – it will be over 100 pages long for many agencies.
 - The Exhibit C report includes client information and payment details, so must be handled carefully to protect client data.
 - Please note that the Exhibit C displays only paid records, but it displays records based on the status as of the date the report is run (not the date parameters of the report). In the above example, the record paid on Dec 5th would show as paid on the November report (for the Exhibit C), which conflicts with the Exhibit B and Exhibit E data. This is by design, and for this reason the Exhibit C should not be used to compare or validate any monthly transactions.
 - The Exhibit C can be run periodically to identify potential data discrepancies with the Service Code (this comes from the Payment Type field on the Vendor & Payments page of the MIS). This data is summarized at the bottom of the report, and can help ensure there are no large-volume data discrepancies at the end of the year.

- Each of these reports has a specific purpose, and they have been built to provide quick access to required data for monthly and year-end reporting. But they can also help ensure quality data, reduce year-end data cleanup, and provide training tips, if they are run periodically and the results used to identify trends and correct discrepancies as they are discovered.

(Next Best Practice: Exit Program Process)

MIS Web Resources

- **MIS page on the MACA Web Site:** <http://www.communityaction.org/MIS.aspx>
- **Patch Update and change control documents** are located on the MIS Resources page of the MACA Web site. This includes each change implemented in any patch (a separate PDF file for each recent patch), and the status of changes submitted from the network:
<http://www.communityaction.org/MIS%20Resources.aspx>
- **HOW TO Documents** page on MACA's website. Check frequently for new postings. The following is a direct link to the HOW TO Documents page:
http://www.communityaction.org/files/MIS/HOW_TO_Documents_Combined_3_11_10.pdf
- **Adsystem Published Manuals:** <http://www.communityaction.org/Manuals.aspx>
- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):** The following is a direct link to the FAQ page on the MACA Help Desk site (no login required). This site currently has information posted under 6 categories: Assessment Script, Printing, Reports, Agency Admin, General FAQs and Error Messages. <https://caamis.helpdeskconnect.com/?cmd=faq&sid=>

