

Florida's Automated FIDM Tracking Process

Among the numerous challenges facing States as they implement the many provisions of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), is how best to manage the information being sent to them from the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) as a result of Multistate Financial Institution Data Match (MSFIDM).

MSFIDM is operated by OCSE on behalf of States and deals solely with financial institutions operating in two or more States. OCSE sends the multistate financial institutions a compiled file of delinquent obligors. The institutions compare the OCSE file with their open accounts and transmit matched information back to OCSE. OCSE then forwards this information to States and Territories where liens or levies may be issued in a manner that is consistent with their State law.

Florida has created a process for handling these multistate matches that may well prove to be a model that other States can follow. When MSFIDM matches are returned to Florida from OCSE, the data is run through an import routine that loads it into Florida's Automated Tracking of Levy Actions Statewide (ATLAS) database system where all matched account data is stored and maintained.

Once the account information is in ATLAS, a series of tests which are based on Florida's internal policy and procedures, screens out what Florida considers non-eligible obligors' account information. For example, the program screens out those accounts with less than a \$600 arrearage or are less than four months delinquent. It also screens out accounts deemed to be ineligible by Florida State policy, such as trust accounts or IRAs.

All of the remaining data is then coded as a "New Match" so it can be quickly recognized by a worker and reviewed to determine whether a freeze and seize action is warranted. If it is determined that action should be taken, the worker changes the status in the database to the next appropriate action and codes the match information in order to generate a freeze notice to the financial institution from which the match was received.

The database stores all necessary information used to track the freeze period, notice generation, due process periods, contest information, as well as levy and settlement collections. The system also tracks related actions generated as a direct result of the freeze and seize actions such as whether:

- this is the first ever collection on this case,
- an Income Deduction Order was established as a result of this action, and
- the amount of the collection is enough to payoff and close the case.

Queries and reports may be generated from the database to provide virtually any information that is tracked in the database. For example, Florida's FIDM Weekly Management Report provides statistics such as the number of quarterly match files sent and received from financial institutions, the number of freezes sent and the number of levies collected as well as

the amounts collected and the number of contests filed. These reports help keep staff abreast of both the progress of cases and any problems.

The ATLAS database system was developed in two parts—a front-end and a back-end module. The back end is where the relational database tables are stored and was developed using Microsoft Access 97. The front-end is the viewer module and was written using Microsoft Visual Basic 6. The front-end module is installed onto each of the levy worker's personal computers. It looks for data from the back-end module which is housed on Florida's FIDM server. Since Florida has 26 FIDM/levy workers throughout the state, this setup allows for faster processing, as the logic to maintain and update the data which is housed on the server occurs on individual personal computers. Both the front- and back-end modules were written to allow for quick translation to an Oracle-based system for future expansion. ATLAS will also incorporate needed fields for upcoming Administrative Enforcement of Interstate cases (AEI) data and its associated levy tracking.

While Florida has found that some financial institutions may be less sophisticated in using computers than others, overall the State has received strong support from the financial community as it has implemented the FIDM and MSFIDM programs. More than 4000 freezes have already been sent to financial institutions during Florida's current fiscal year (between July 1, 1999 and April 12, 2000). Florida has received approximately \$2 million in FIDM/levy collections during this same period.

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