

## CUSTOMER SERVICE – AN AGENCY COMMITMENT

So you say you want to reduce your error rate below Federal tolerance? You say you really want enhanced funding? You say you really, really want to come to the conference next year and brag about your accuracy rate instead of regret your error rate?

Iowa and Georgia have the answer for you. Marjorie Young, the Director of the Metro Change Center with the Georgia Department of Human Resources and Jane Jorgenson, the Bureau Chief of the Food Stamp Program with the Iowa Department of Human Services shared their answer to your wants and needs in the error reduction game. Their solution? CHANGE REPORTING CENTERS!

The two States have different systems but the goal and the results are the same – substantial reduction in Food Stamp error rates over the past two years. Georgia had never – in recent history – been below tolerance, had never qualified for enhanced funding. Iowa was watching their Food Stamp error rate climb until it was in excess of 13%. While Georgia has modeled their program on the Texas system – with central call centers staffed separately from Eligibility offices, Iowa is more comfortable with allowing each County the option of how to use the system. Currently Iowa's system is mandatory for all Counties. Soon (by July, 2002) all of Georgia will be using two central call centers to report changes in address, the birth of a new baby or a new job for all offices Statewide.

The success of these systems seems to be tied to the ability to make changes immediately upon receiving information, the responsiveness of staff to client needs and that the system prompts staff to ask the right questions of the person reporting the change.

And we all know that accuracy and the correct issuance of Food Stamp benefits is really called customer service. And what State hasn't expressed a desire to improve its customer service. Talk to the folks from Iowa and Georgia – they have a plan!!