

Modernization of Public Assistance in Florida: A Case Study

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ACCESS Florida

Goals

- Reduce Administrative Costs
- Increase Client Access

Changes

- Organizational Restructuring
- Policy Simplification
- Technology

Key Study Questions

- How did application procedures change?
- What are the key organizational changes?
- How is technology used?
- Has modernization affected participation?
- How much did ACCESS Florida save the state in administrative costs?
- What are the lessons for other states?

Study Overview

- **Study Focuses on July – September 2006**
- **Site Visits and/or Phone Interviews in 7 Districts**
- **Focus Groups with FSP Clients in 3 Districts**
- **Analysis of Participation, Payment Error and Cost Data**

Timeline

- **2003: Mandate from Florida Legislature**
- **2004: Organizational Restructuring
Office Closures Begin**
- **2005: Web Application
Call Centers
Community Partners**
- **2006: Case Study (July – September)**

How did Application Procedures Change?

Electronic Application

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar displaying "https://dcf-access.dcf.state.fl.us - Start Application - Access Florida - Mozilla Firefox". The page header includes "Economic Self Sufficiency ACCESS Florida" and a banner image of a family. The main content area features a welcome message: "Welcome to Florida's Department of Children & Families Online Application for Public Assistance" and a "HELP" button. Below this, a section titled "What would you like to do? Click the button next to your choice then click START." lists five options, each with a radio button and a help icon:

- Apply for Benefits
- Complete a review
- Complete an Unfinished Application or Review
- Add Comments to an Application that Has Been Submitted Using an E-Signature
- Report a Change to My Case

Below the list, a section titled "You may need the following information for all individuals for whom you are applying:" lists three items, each with a checkmark icon:

- ✓ Social Security number and date of birth
- ✓ Income information such as job, child support or any other sources
- ✓ [partially obscured]

The browser's status bar at the bottom shows "Done" on the left and "dcf-access.dcf.state.fl.us" on the right.

Location of Application

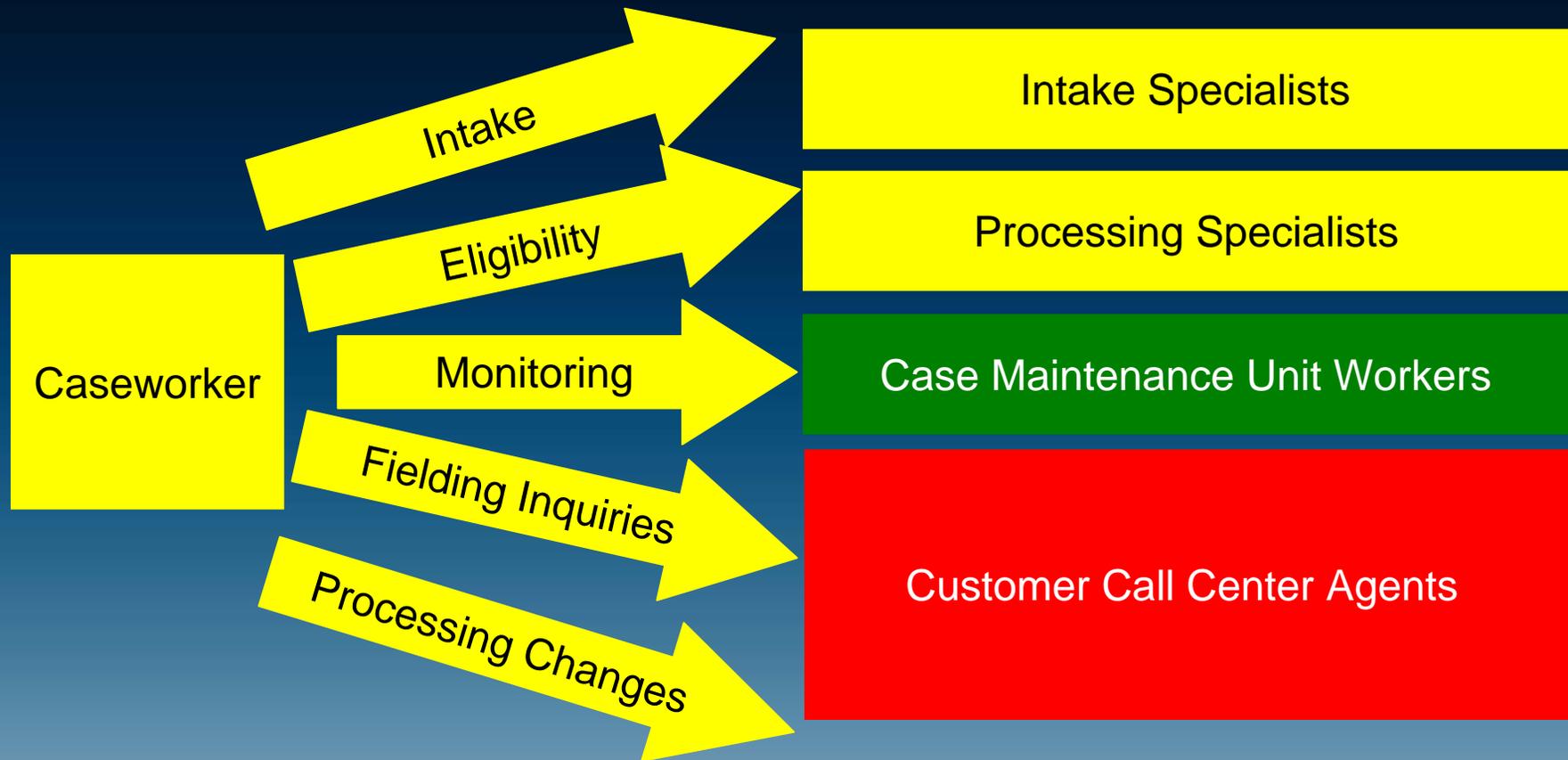
- **At Customer Service Center**
 - Web application on lobby PCs
- **Outside Customer Service Center**
 - Home, office, or other place with web access
 - Community partners

Eligibility Interviews

- **Abbreviated Interview (10 Minutes)**
- **Green Track → Case Processing**
- **Red Track → Additional Interviews**
- **Reduced Documentation**

What Are the Key Organizational Changes?

Specialization of Caseworker Functions



Separate Intake and Processing Functions

- **Before modernization:**
 - Clerks
 - Case Manager
- **After modernization:**
 - Meeter-Greeter
 - Computer helper in some Customer Service Centers
 - Clerks
 - Intake Specialist
 - Processing Specialist

Case Maintenance Units

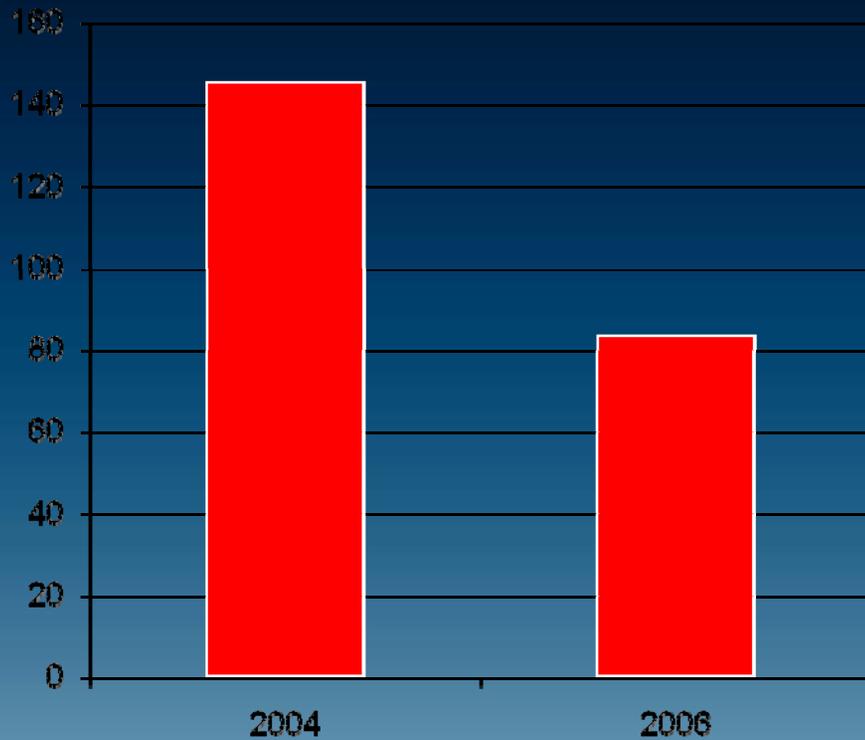
- One for each district
- Database monitoring and matching
- Apply and lift sanctions
- Process Medicaid requests and manage Medicaid files

Community Partners

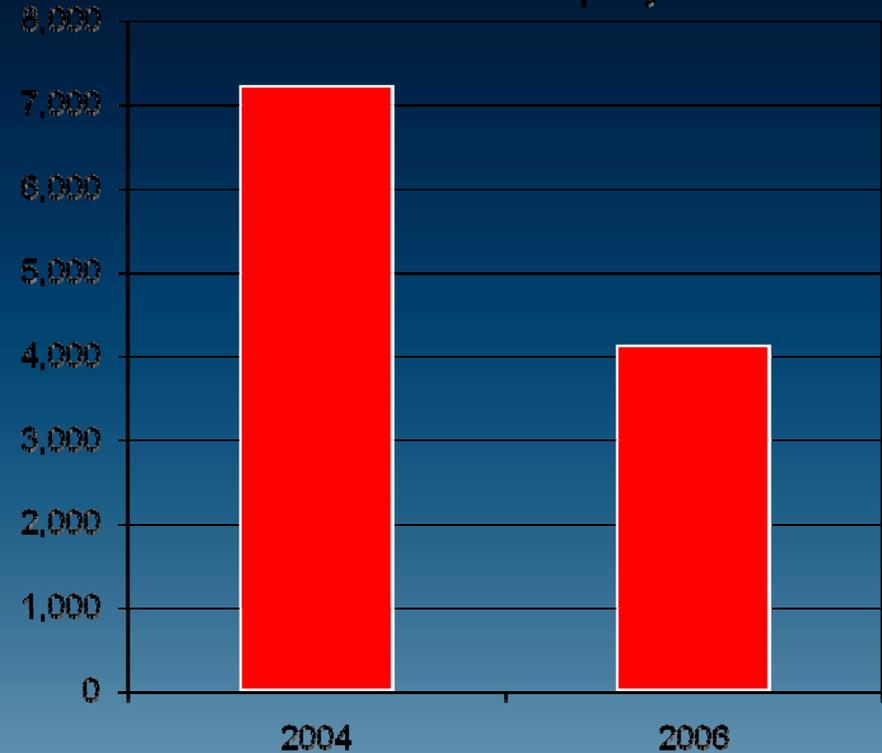
Services Provided	Partner	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Paper Applications	✓	✓	✓	✓
Web Application Access		✓	✓	✓
Telephones for Clients		✓	✓	✓
Print out Application Summary			✓	✓
Fax and Copier for Client Use				✓
Staff to Assist Clients and Verify Identity				✓

Agency Downsizing

DCF Customer Service Centers

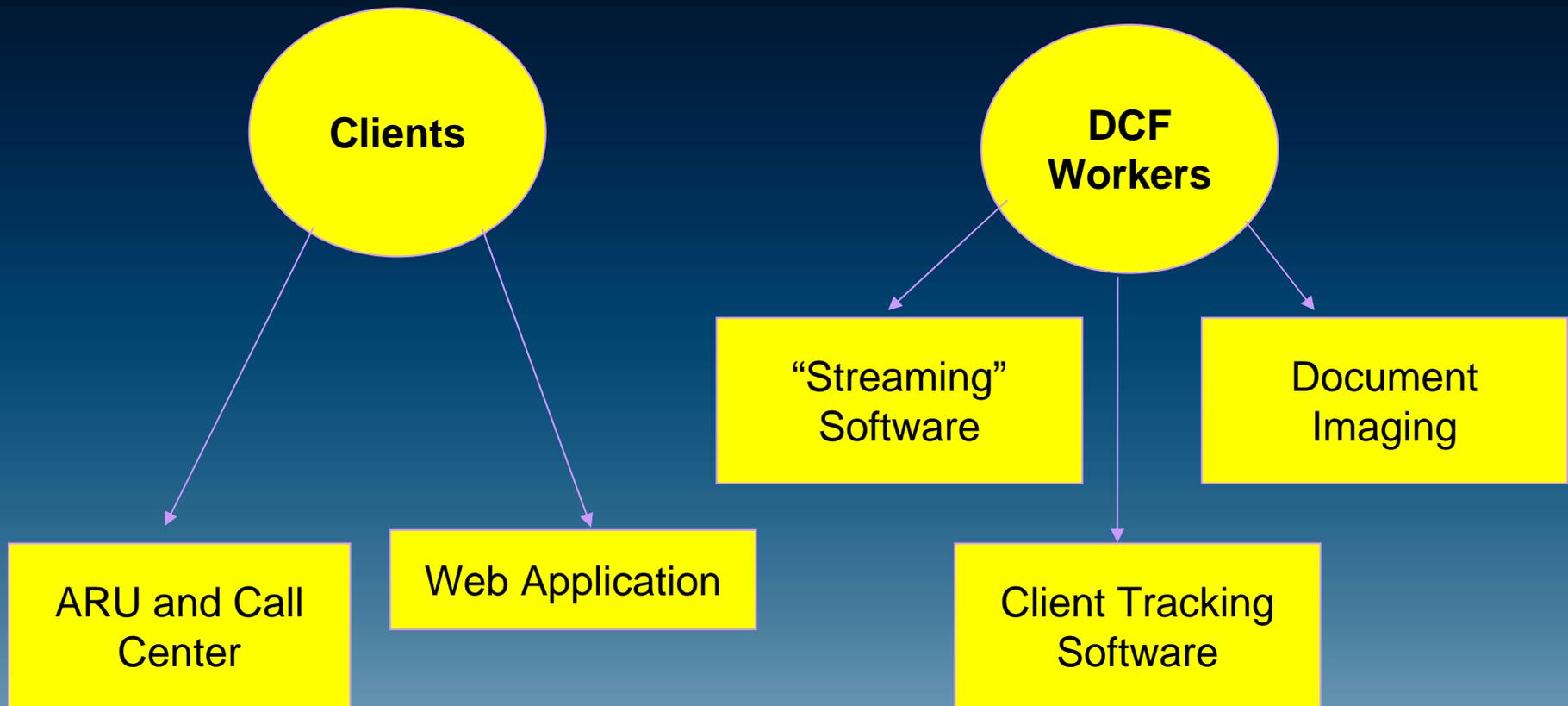


DCF Total Employees



How Is Technology Used?

Modernized Technology for Clients and DCF Workers



Customer Call Center

- **Toll-free number directs to Automated Response Unit that answers common questions**
- **Clients can choose to be routed to a live agent at the call center**

Customer Call Center (continued)

ARU Statistics, July 2006

	October 2005	January 2006	April 2006	July 2006
Total Calls Received (thousands)	885	1,136	913	1,151
Percentage of callers using ARU to look up case data	20	14	18	15
Percentage transferred to call center	50	51	49	55
Average call center wait time (minutes)	3.33	4.51	5.18	7.93

Source: MPR tabulations of Florida Department of Children and Families data.

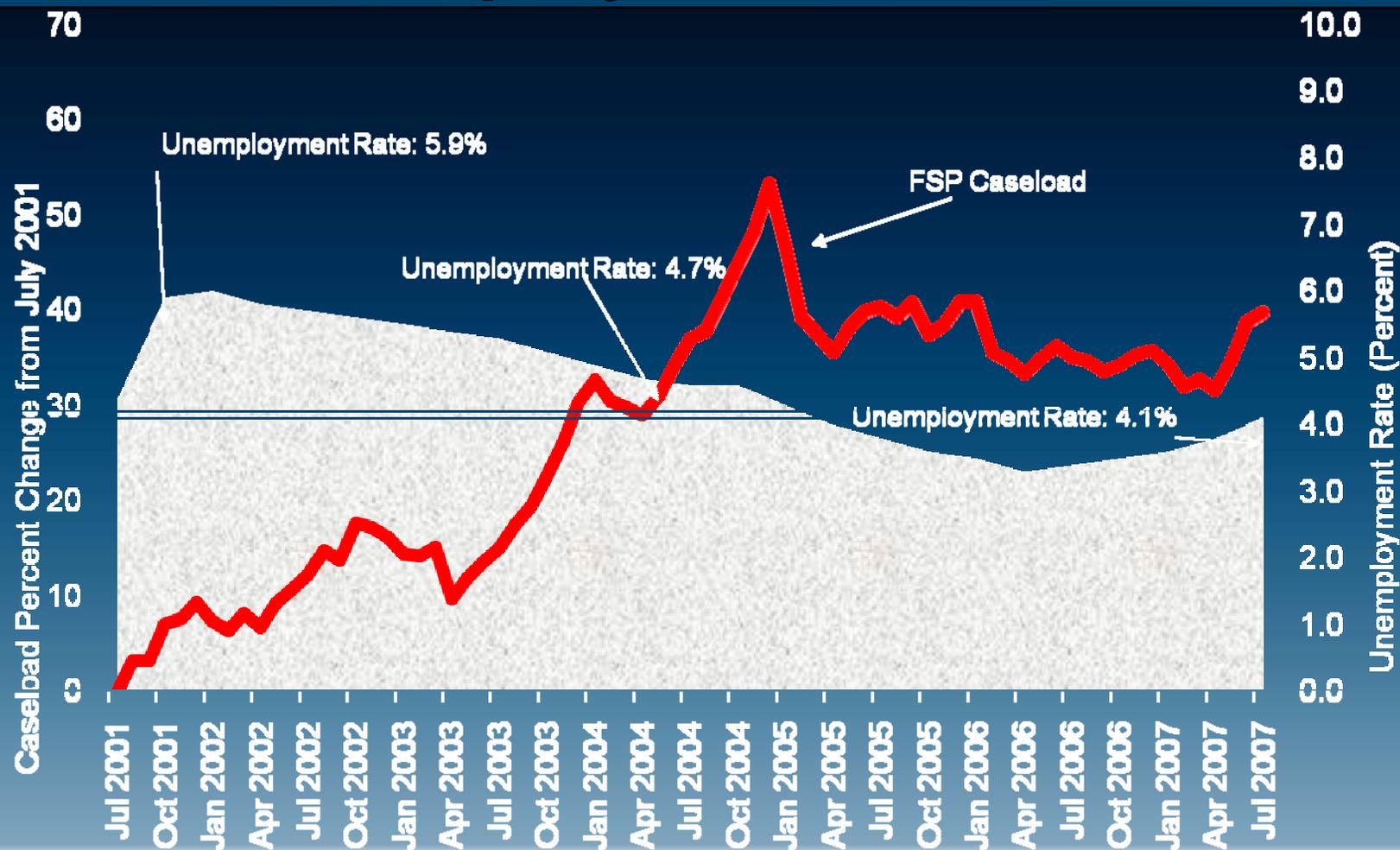
Potential Impacts

Trends in Participation, Errors and Costs

- **Data sources for trend analyses:**
 - DCF administrative data
 - FNS QC error data
 - DCF operational cost data
 - FNS form 269 data
- **Trends do not prove causality**

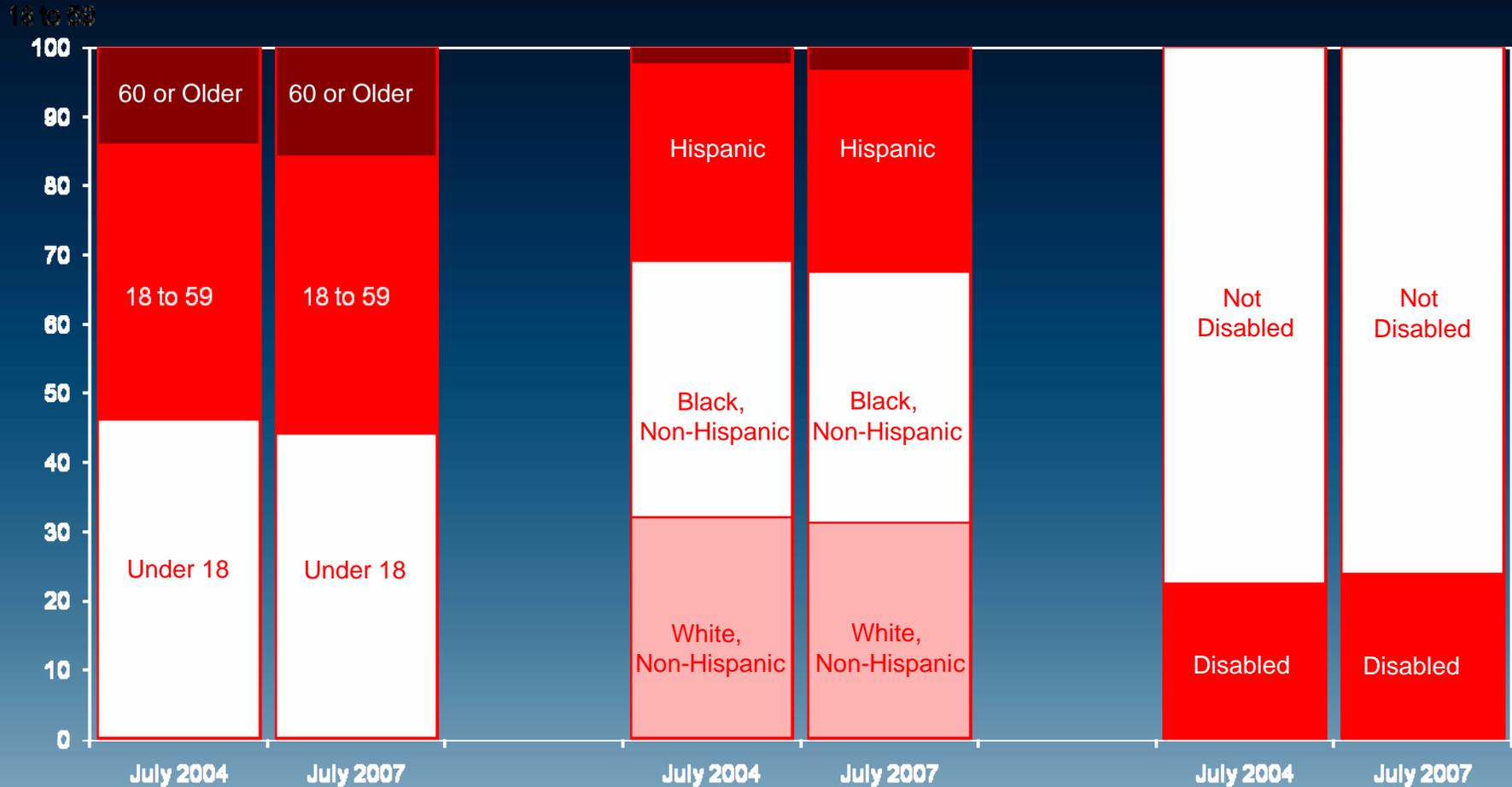
How Has Modernization Affected Participation?

Florida FSP Caseload Levelled off as Employment Rose



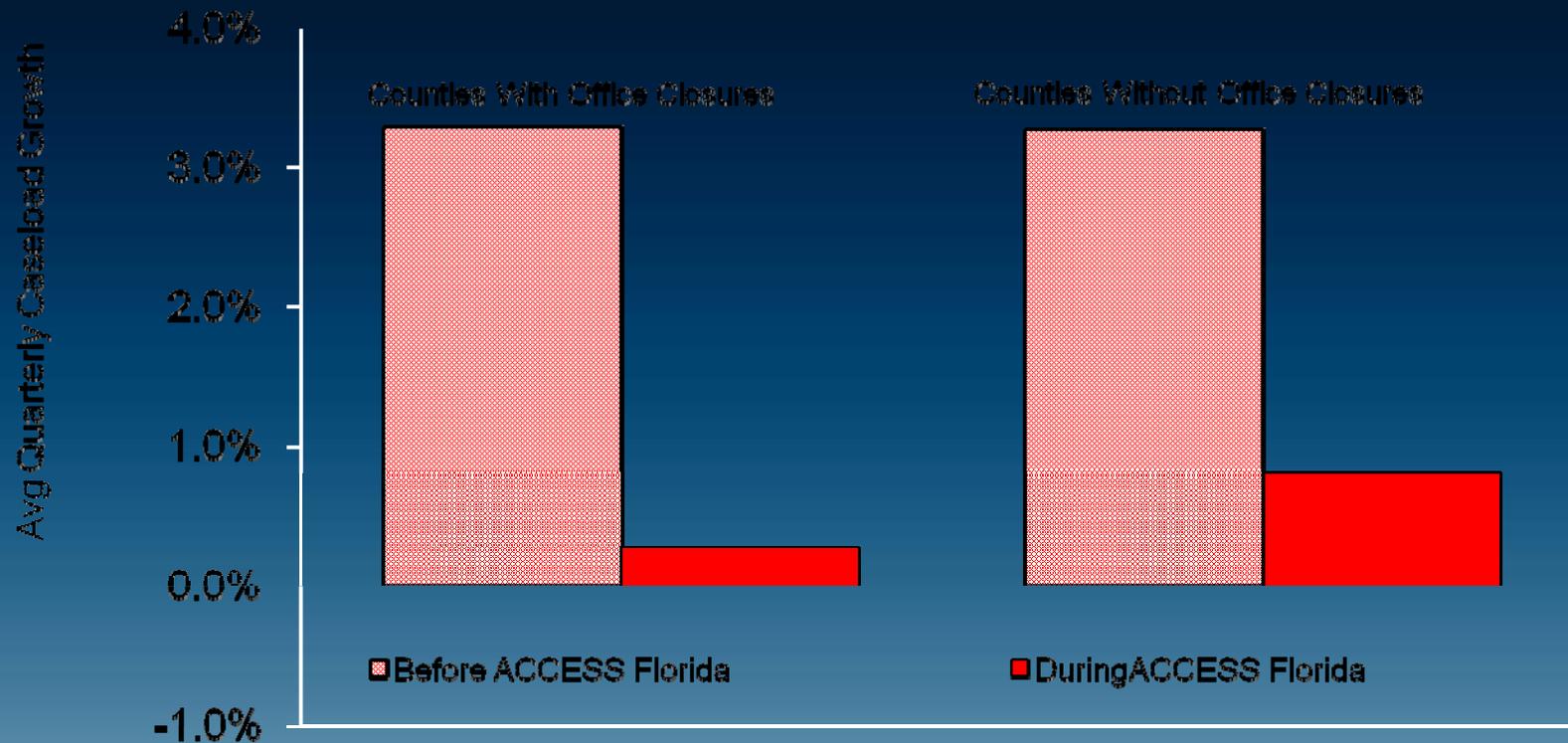
Source: MPR tabulations of FNS Program Operations data and Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

Caseload Composition Changed Little



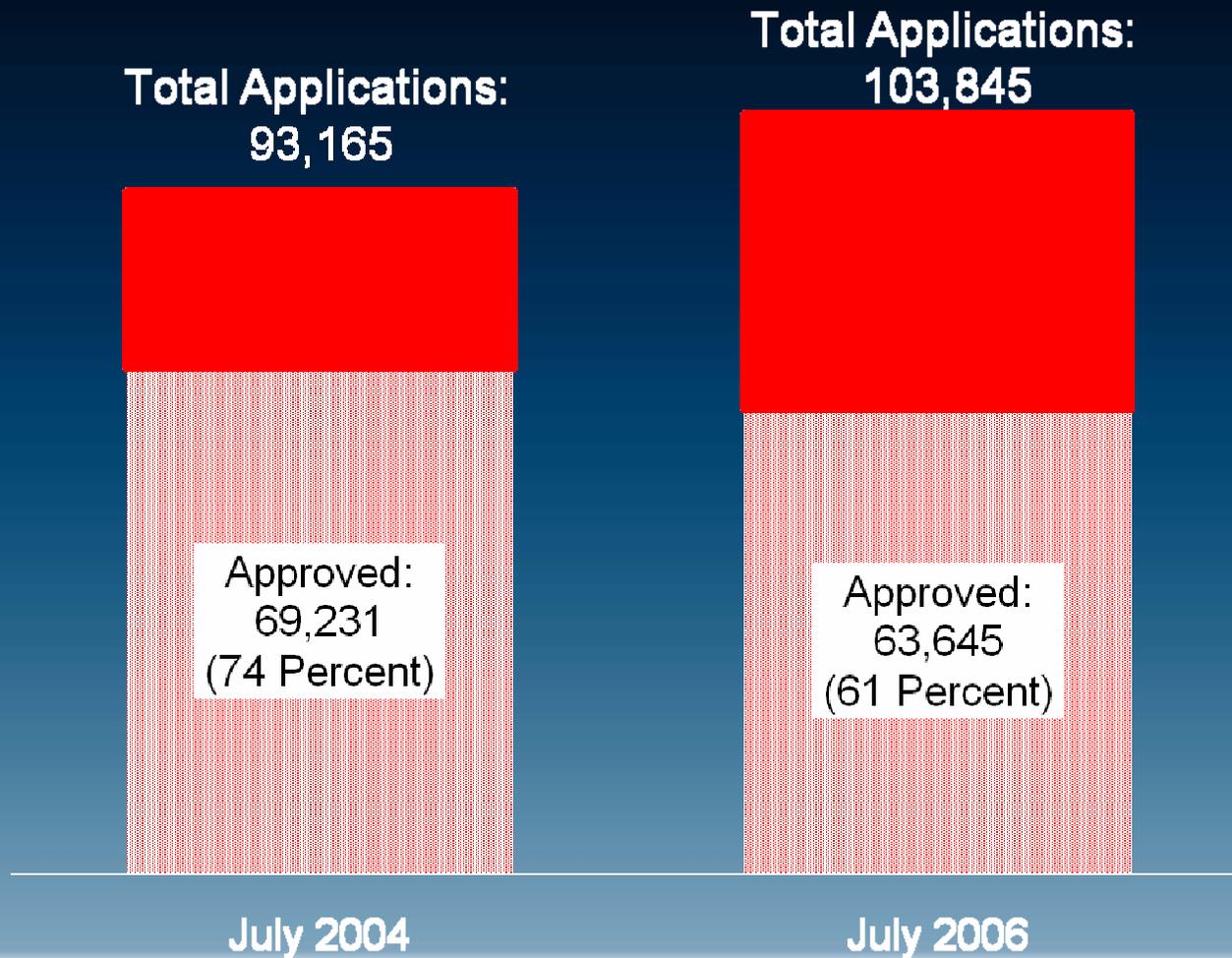
Source: MPR tabulations of Florida Department of Children and Families data.

Caseload Grew Less in Counties with Fewer Access Points



Source: MPR tabulations of Florida Department of Children and Families data.

Applications Increased while Approval Rates Decreased



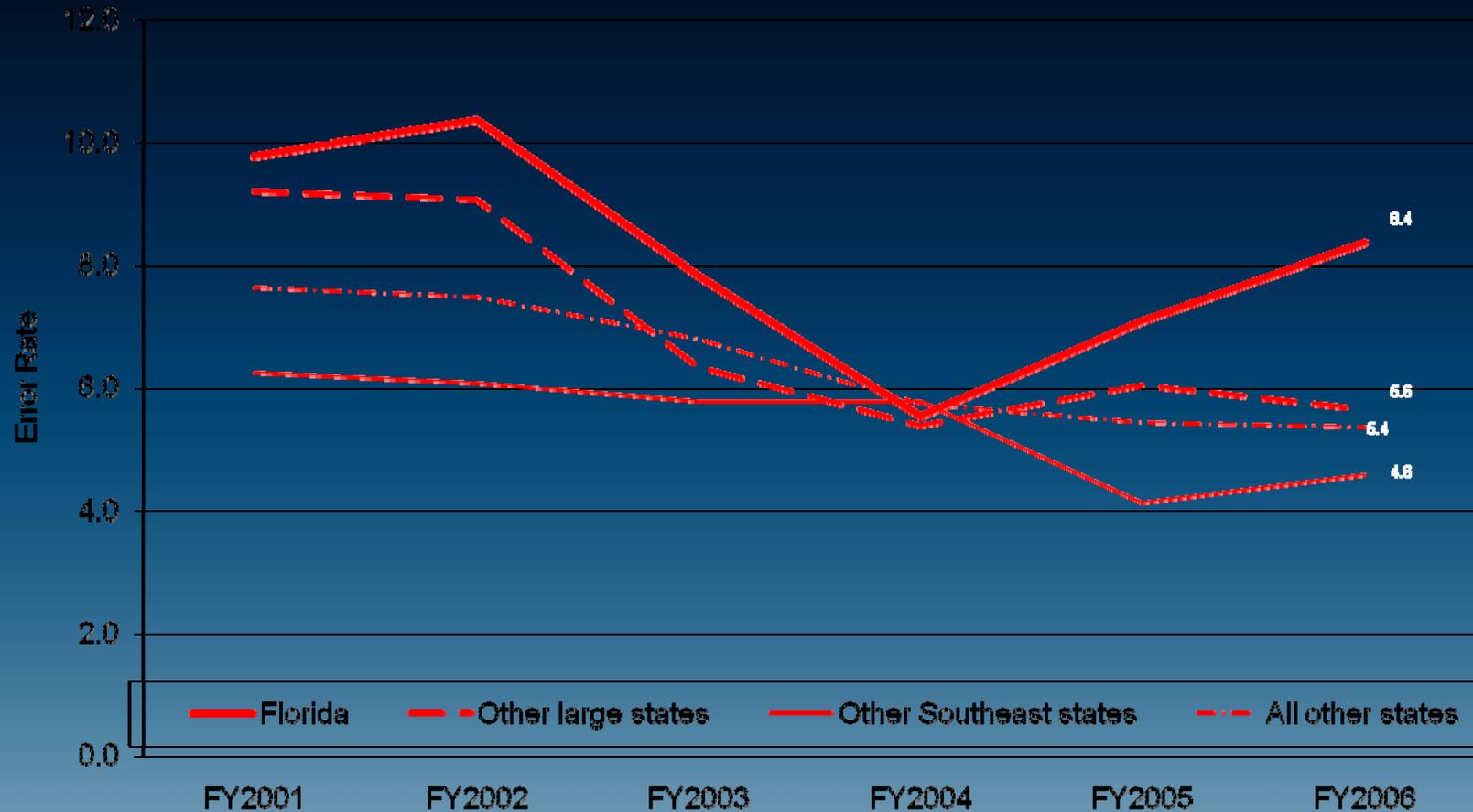
Source: MPR tabulations of Florida Department of Children and Families data.

Client Impressions

- **Rated most recent DCF experience positively**
- **Mixed opinions of assistance available in lobby**
- **Generally aware of new self-service components**
- **Preferred the “personal touch” of the caseworker model**
- **Liked the web application**
- **Struggled with use of call centers**

Have the Changes Affected Payment Errors?

Payment Errors in Florida Increased Under Modernization



Source: MPR tabulations of data from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.

Note: Error rates reflect underpayments and overpayments to clients (including payments to ineligible individuals). Large states include: CA, IL, MI, NY, OH, PA, TX. Southeast Region includes: AL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN.

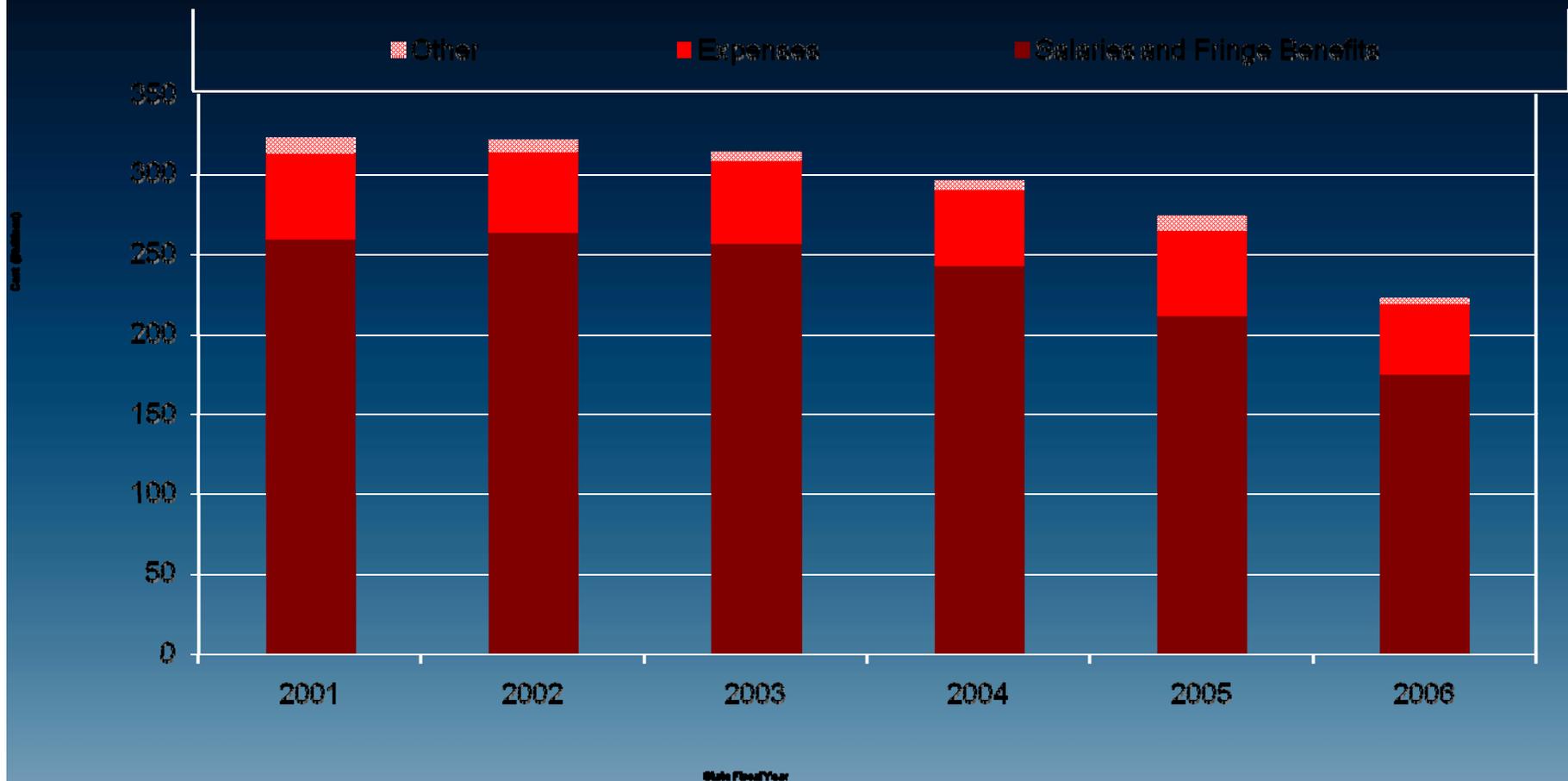
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Staff Impressions About Payment Errors

- **Reduced accountability could increase errors**
- **CMUs could reduce errors through specialization**
- **Limited time to interact with clients could contribute to errors**
- **Neither web application nor relaxed verification are likely to cause errors**

How Much Did ACCESS Florida Save in Administrative Costs?

DCF Operating Costs Fell Substantially



Source: MPR tabulations of Florida Department of Children and Families data.
Costs are inflation-adjusted to 2006 dollars and include expenses related to providing disaster food stamp benefits.

What Are the Lessons for Other States?

Lessons for Other States

- **The timing and order of changes can impact successful implementation during initial stages**
- **Florida's communication strategy appears to be effective**
- **Local flexibility appears to enhance services**
- **More resources for fraud prevention, benefit recovery, and quality control may help offset any increase in error rates**
- **Types of worker skills and recruiting efforts likely will change under a modernization model**

Questions or Comments?

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