



Media Release

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ACCESS ARKANSAS PROCESSING CENTER OPENS IN BATESVILLE

BATESVILLE, Ark. – Gov. Mike Beebe, Department of Human Services (DHS) Director John Selig and other state and local officials celebrated the grand opening of the ACCESS Arkansas Processing Center in Batesville today.

The state-of-the-art facility is expected to eventually process more than 30,000 applications and renewals for public assistance each month. Arkansans will submit most of those applications through the Department's new website access.arkansas.gov. Individuals now have the option of applying for benefits on-line, by mail or by going to their local DHS County Office.

“Combining the work of the center with online applications allows DHS to become a more efficient and effective agency while making our services more accessible to the public,” Director Selig said. “This also answers Governor Beebe’s call for state agencies to use resources more wisely.”

Director Selig and DHS Division of County Operations Director Joni Jones met with Gov. Beebe more than two years ago to propose the idea of automating case processing. The Governor advocated building something that would improve the application process for clients, result in efficiencies and be self-sustaining. Jones said at the grand opening Friday that the center achieves all of those goals.

Technology at the center is expected to reduce the amount of time it takes an application to be approved or denied and will move DHS closer to its goal of going paperless with applications and case files. Previously, individuals submitted paper applications for ARKids First health benefits, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other types of assistance to DHS county offices across the state for processing by caseworkers.

“The center represents something more substantial than a new building,” Jones said. “It’s the foundation of modernizing welfare.”

The \$3.1 million facility was built, furnished and equipped with funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). The 25,000-square-foot building sits on land provided by the Independence County Economic Development Commission. The University of Arkansas Community

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College at Batesville partnered with DHS to provide a transitional facility in Cushman for staff training. Once at capacity, the center will employ about 100 people.

Gov. Beebe told the crowd of about 200 people that the proposal to put the center in Batesville was chosen from 75 proposals in 35 communities.

“You won in large part because of your local leadership and in large part because of your community’s willingness to be a partner with the state of Arkansas,” said Gov. Beebe.