

# Part of food stamp website is offline

Access has been affected for 2 weeks; contractor earlier released personal data

**By Tony Cook**

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Earlier this year, state contractor RCR Technology wrongly released the private information of Indiana welfare recipients. Now, part of the state's benefits website administered by the company is broken.

Hoosiers who receive food stamps and other government benefits have been unable to access their case status on the state welfare agency's website for the past two weeks, officials with the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration told The Indianapolis Star.

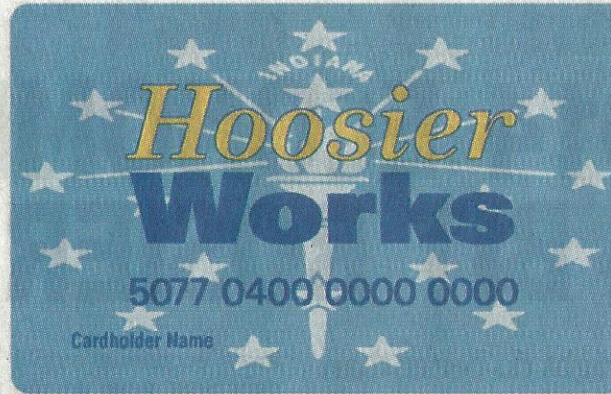
"Some of the functionality of our online portal has been taken offline while system enhancements are being made," said Jim Gavin, an FSSA

spokesman. "This is in relation to an unexpected issue found internally that indicated information did not display correctly."

He said RCR is working to fix the problems.

Clients can call (800) 403-0864 or go to a local Division of Family Resources office to check the status of their cases or receive proof of eligibility, Gavin said. Other areas of the website, including online applications, are still working, he said.

The problems come just four months after revelations that RCR wrongly revealed private data of FSSA clients, including Social Security numbers. The state notified 187,000 clients this summer that their information might have been accidentally mailed to other clients. RCR later



The Hoosier Works card allows for the electronic distribution of benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. THE STAR 2001 FILE ART

said the information of only 64 clients had been revealed, including 16 whose Social Security numbers had been shared.

The state is in the process of recovering \$369,000 in expenses from RCR for those errors, Gavin said. RCR also is providing free credit monitoring for the affected clients.

The latest problems at

hindrance for some people seeking benefits, he said.

"You can imagine a single mom trying to take care of kids where she's eligible for food stamps, but her only chance to check her status may be in the evening," he said.

The problems are especially disconcerting given the timing, he said. Food stamp recipients are experiencing a decrease in benefits as a 2009 federal stimulus measure ends. For a family of four, the cuts equate to about \$36 a month.

The FSSA's Gavin said he doesn't expect the food stamp benefit cuts to exacerbate the website issues. Recipients have been notified of the reductions by mail and can use a separate website operated by J.P. Morgan to check their food benefit card balances, he said. That website is www.ebt

account.jpmmorgan.com.

Indianapolis-based RCR administers the state's online benefits portal and provides document management services under a four-year, \$53 million contract with the state that expires at the end of 2016.

A receptionist at RCR said the company had no comment.

RCR was initially an FSSA subcontractor but was elevated to prime contractor after Gov. Mitch Daniels fired IBM over a botched 10-year, \$1.37 billion deal to overhaul the state's welfare system, Gavin said.

"RCR is responsible for fixing the issue and providing ongoing maintenance and is in the process of doing so," he said.

He couldn't say when the website would be fully functional again.

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