

RESPONSIVE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE IN TIMES OF CONSTITUENT NEED:

How Technology Can Solve HHS Case Management Challenges

Case management workloads continue to stretch the capacity and resources of health and human services (HHS) programs in normal times (see breakout to the right). In times of crisis, HHS programs face even more challenges due to external forces like ballooning unemployment or the need to deliver services remotely if agencies are shuttered during an emergency. And, in times of crisis, there is a sudden influx of even more people relying on these programs to meet their most basic needs. State social services agencies, which administer many federal programs in addition to their own state's individual benefits, must streamline case management processes, cut administrative costs and reduce waste. Technology, specifically an enterprise information management platform, can help agencies deliver better, more responsive service.

Current Case Management Challenges in State and Local Government

Social services agencies face several challenges that make it more difficult for them to optimize case management processes and improve service delivery.

Paper-based processes. Many agencies rely on paper-based processes to share information and maintain records. Colleagues often email back and forth about the status of a case and use a spreadsheet to track information, which leads to more inefficiency. Paper-based processes also can compromise security and data accuracy. HHS caseworkers regularly need to collaborate with health care professionals, social workers and other service providers and share clients' personally identifiable information (PII). Using paper-based processes increases the odds of missing or inaccurate information in case files or that this information will be accidentally shared with an entity that may not need access to it.

Evolving regulatory environment. At the same time, a challenging regulatory environment can make data sharing more cumbersome and harder for caseworkers to do their jobs. As federal and state regulations change, social service agencies need to remain agile to meet evolving requirements, which is difficult without technology that automates compliance tracking and records management.

Even when agencies do rely on technology, the systems aren't always interoperable. This prevents caseworkers from better collaborating with other public assistance organizations and gaining a holistic view of a beneficiary's needs and interactions with programs across the HHS ecosystem.

Churn. Many public assistance programs must recertify and re-establish eligibility for individuals and families who

At Capacity: Case Management Workloads Steadily Increase

- SNAP serves **40 MILLION** Americans¹ at a cost of roughly **\$57 BILLION**.²
- Nearly **71 MILLION** Americans receive benefits through Medicaid and CHIP.³
- Local governments spend **22 PERCENT OF THEIR BUDGET** on social services programs each year.⁴
- **TWENTY-ONE PERCENT** of Americans participate in government assistance programs every month.⁵

receive services. When agencies send letters or notices via mail, recipients can miss them, leading them to temporarily lose benefits and having to reapply. Churn isn't just detrimental to program participants, it also costs agencies because they have to dedicate more staff time and resources to these application reviews and eligibility determinations. One study found that churn for SNAP cost agencies \$80 per household to process eligibility and that program participants in some states temporarily lost a total of between \$2 million and \$108 million in benefits.⁶

It's critical that agencies adopt an integrated, platform approach to case management that allows them to digitize services; lower program costs; and automate data capture, records management and compliance.

The Path to Better Case Management

An enterprise information management platform, which is also sometimes referred to as a content services platform, brings together case management and content management capabilities, document and data capture, records management and customer communications management capabilities into a single solution to improve business processes and service delivery to constituents.

A cloud-based platform can consolidate data from disparate sources, including legacy systems and enterprise resource planning (ERP) solutions, to provide a single point of access for case-related data. With this solution, caseworkers can automate workflows from the intake process all the way through recertification. For example, notifications can be configured to send program recipients an automatic email several weeks before the end of the certification period or

periodic reminders to update their address if they've moved. Some additional benefits include:

Enhanced citizen engagement. By connecting other digital channels to an enterprise information management platform, agencies can allow constituents to submit applications and supporting documentation electronically via their preferred method, such as mobile, email or an online portal. And, if constituents still prefer to physically mail applications, agencies can scan and automatically capture paper documents and then route them electronically for eligibility reviews and decisions, reducing manual data entry and increasing efficiencies.

More effective collaboration. By consolidating key business processes, agencies can collaborate more effectively with partner organizations and take advantage of secure data and file sharing via the cloud. An enterprise information management platform enables dynamic and collaborative case management, with threaded discussions, automatic updates and notifications to relevant stakeholders, which reduces agencies' reliance on inefficient, paper-based processes. These platforms also offer flexible mobile capabilities that allow employees to access case files from anywhere, enabling agencies to continue critical business operations even when crises prevent staff from physically being in the office to use certain systems.

Improved records management. Another key benefit is improved compliance and retention policies through better records management. One human services agency realized this benefit as its staff members struggled to maintain a large number of case files every day. Limited storage space and paper files led to duplicated information and hindered service delivery, so the agency adopted a solution that would enable electronic document records management. This not only reduced the amount of paper files, it also introduced self-service capabilities that allowed auditors, attorneys and other authorized users to access and complete case files on their own. Completing federal audits is now easier, and multi-level password protection, automatic audit trails and built-in security features within the platform make protecting PII and staying in compliance simpler. All of this equates to less risk and better service for the constituents the agency helps every year.

Conclusion

Social services agencies do difficult work every day delivering public assistance to people in need. However, they could be even more empowered with better case management systems. An enterprise information

Embracing Technology Modernization to Improve Service

The Pennsylvania Treasury Department, which processes unemployment benefits and other supplementary payments, adopted an enterprise information management platform to digitize its business processes. The department was outsourcing the processing of unemployment payments to the Social Security Administration, which slowed the payment process and cost the state millions of dollars. It implemented an enterprise information management platform for three of its most critical business processes, which enabled the department to move them in house and save \$30 million each year in outsourcing and transaction costs. Using modern technology also allows the department to be more nimble, especially in times of crisis when demand for public services skyrockets.

management platform provides role-based access to critical documents, automates repetitive tasks and workflow, and improves communication and collaboration. More importantly, it enables agencies to fulfill their mission and be much more responsive to constituents, especially when they need it most.

This piece was written and produced by the Center for Digital Government Content Studio, with information and input from Hyland Software.

Endnotes

1. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/policy-basics-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>
2. <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/TRP6001A027NBEA>
3. <https://www.kff.org/health-reform/state-indicator/total-monthly-medicaid-and-chip-enrollment/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>
4. <https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/state-and-local-finance-initiative/state-and-local-backgrounders/state-and-local-expenditures>
5. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2015/cb15-97.html>
6. Center for Budget and Policy Priorities: Measuring the Impact of Churn in Health and Human Services Programs on Participants and State and Local Agencies

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