

Using Technology to Stretch the Social Safety Net



Mark Brewer, President, Global Public Sector Solutions for Conduent, discusses the challenges state and local agencies are facing during the COVID-19 crisis and solutions to keep the public safe and provide much needed health and human services.

What challenges do public health agencies face as they move through the pandemic, especially around contact tracing and reporting?

Ramping up capabilities and skills, maintaining adequate health care services and social services support, and managing uncertainties around funding are all significant challenges. In terms of managing COVID-19 itself, testing, contact tracing and reporting keep agency leaders up at night. Accurate contact tracing is critical in the fight to contain the spread of COVID-19 and save lives. At the same time, an important concern is the confidentiality of patient data and HIPAA compliance throughout the case management process. This information about cases and those who may be exposed must be sent to the CDC, which requires sophisticated solutions to help state agencies measure, report and make informed decisions that will help contain the virus' spread. The process for agencies to submit this data is specified by the CDC and is very strict; however, by mandating all agencies submit data in a consistent, standardized

way, the CDC can better ensure higher-quality data.

To assist with these and other complexities, many agencies are turning to cloud-based tools such as Conduent's Maven platform, which is specifically designed to securely track verified and validated COVID-related data. This system should not be confused with consumer-facing tools that have very different levels of security and different access points, such as Bluetooth and beaconing.

As individuals and families confront pandemic-related issues, what challenges do state and local agencies face in delivering services to them?

Besides access to unemployment insurance and social support services, some individuals need access to contact tracing for themselves, their friends and families. Then of course, they also need relevant health care services. Given the requirement for social distancing, state and local agencies are challenged with pivoting from in-person services to virtual

services. While some states are already using more of an electronic approach — along with call center technologies — for unemployment insurance and SNAP programs, many agencies are doing their best to make those types of virtual services available.

What approaches and technologies can help agencies make a difference in the lives of their workers and the people they serve?

It starts with leadership and prioritizing the well-being of constituents. To help keep workers and constituents safe, state and local agencies are using proven solutions like ours to track and trace the spread of COVID-19, and make informed containment decisions. Transportation is another area where technology can help keep the public safe. For example, as people get back to work and start moving around more, it's important to have contactless technology in place so individuals can purchase and ride the bus or train without touching ticketing or validation equipment, limiting the potential for exposure.



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