Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services: MyCSW

⋗ The Client

The Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services is the public agency charged with the duty of establishing, managing and advocating a system of services in partnership with parents, relatives, foster parents and community organizations to ensure children's safety, optimum growth and healthy development. The largest County DCFS organization in the nation, LAC DCFS currently manages over 40,000 open child welfare cases and deals with close to 155,000 emergency response referrals yearly. The department employs over 6,600 staff including intake workers, investigators, caseworkers, business managers and others across the County over 16 offices, and manages over 30 specialized programs serving the specific needs of children and families.`

⋗ The Challenge

Across the nation, social services organizations have been struggling with the reality of dwindling staff and resources in the face of increasing service-level demands and per-worker caseloads. Given this situation, DCFS needed to find a way to improve efficiency in the area of day-to-day case management in order to maximize the productivity of the County's CSWs (Children's Case Workers). Developing a solution that could address this concern would not only improve the overall service delivery of the department, but also enhance the job satisfaction and morale of the individual case workers, the department's greatest asset.

Overcoming this challenge would require finding a way to better leverage data from the CWS/CMS database, which houses all case-related data for every child in the State who is enrolled in a child welfare program. An application developed two decades ago, CWS/CMS' interface and functions are cumbersome and inefficient in the context of

today's information-driven workplace. Information is organized in a counter-intuitive manner making it tedious to retrieve. Essential data is not organized per child, but rather per activity. Since case planning and management is carried out in a child-centered manner, the interface can slow things down, especially when one social worker potentially handles up to 30 children. A web-enabled application that could re-organize the data to fit existing workflow patterns and present it in a user-friendly format on a single screen would represent a leap forward in terms of ease-of-use and speed.

⋗ The Solution

The Saga Technologies team developed a web-based case management portal called MyCSW that extracted data from CWS/CMS and organized it in a way that would facilitate child-centered lookup and activity monitoring. MyCSW also incorporated a personalized online

Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services: MyCSW

workspace for each CSW which presented vital information, supplemented with tools to help them manage due dates and appointments for each child accessible from a web browser. Along with these tools, MyCSW also integrated existing department applications, such as the GIS system, to provide additional functionality such as visually mapping the location of one's own children, along with key community resources in the same geographical areas.

The Benefits

By web-enabling and organizing data that was previously tedious to retrieve, Saga Technologies was able to significantly improve the efficiency and accuracy of the DCFS' case flow. The MyCSW solution also made the daily routine of the CSWs significantly easier by adding convenience and mobility, which allowed each CSW to focus more on helping children and less on accessing and organizing background information. As an added bonus, Saga Technologies was able to deliver this functionality in just 5 months.

Technologies Utilized

LivePortal.NET, LiveForum.NET, C#, Oracle 9i, ASP.NET, GIS, XML