



## CCWIS—A Call to Action to Increase Capacity

**M**any states are in the process of developing plans for implementing a Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS). These next-generation systems offer improved integration, connectivity, and reporting capabilities. However, too many of the plans for implementation of these systems fail to put emphasis on the improvements in process and management systems that can dramatically increase capacity to serve. The requirements are instead focused on automating what is; providing expanded access to the same process, the same structures, and the same reports. You know the story. We put technology before workflow redesign, and we get a sophisticated system that tells us, in a better way, what we already know: We have massive caseloads and our clients are stuck in piles on caseworker's desks. When we get the process right, we have seen improvements such as 40 percent more clients served and 70 percent efficiency improvements for specific processes, and we know the same opportunities exist for states considering CCWIS.

### Overlooked CCWIS Opportunities

There are several key opportunities that should be included in a complete plan for CCWIS implementation. The discussions in the market regarding modularity and agile development approaches have drowned out the critical focus on dramatically improving process outcomes. There seems to be a hope that by shifting from a waterfall to an agile methodology we will naturally generate a better outcome, but that almost never



happens. You get the results you plan for. These recommendations put the focus back on generating the capacity to improve outcomes:

**1. Focus on process design first.** CCWIS programs risk being technology-first efforts. At the outset, it is essential to take the time to reconsider how the work gets done, who completes it, how long it takes, the outcome, and, most important, how it is tracked. Too often there is a rush to move into screen configuration and design. But to be effective, two things should come first: human-centered process design and an effort to streamline processes. The use of human-centered design techniques, led by staff who understand the practice, is critical to ensure that capacity-driven innovation takes place. This approach challenges the casework process and identifies new ways to manage outcomes efficiently by considering all participants in the experience. Process

streamlining identifies capacity opportunities focused on reducing the effort to produce quality work. If your project starts with system design, the opportunity for significant improvement has been missed.

**2. Manage case flow over caseloads.** Effective management of child welfare processes is often lacking in CCWIS project planning. Dashboards of caseloads, activities, and trends are all discussed and included in the procurement requirements, but the status of the work, what hinders progress, and who is needed to close out a task are rarely considered. Managing case flow across an agency requires careful assessment and planning of the supporting processes. With the right design you can track where the work is, identify bottlenecks, shift staff to where it will be needed, and make better hiring decisions. CCWIS can then

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provide the agency with the opportunity to control the case flow, rather than merely track the work.

**3. Innovate data insights.** There is considerable discussion regarding data analytics for child welfare, and predictive models remain controversial. But there are tremendous opportunities to leverage data to drive outcomes. This requires stepping back and evaluating how data are used as well as the impact and importance of that data in decision-making processes. When new data are identified, how is that data acted upon and by whom? What type of organizational structure would be best suited to analyzing and acting on the data? What new or additional data would help the agency better protect kids? Answering these key questions will enable the agency to determine whether and when caseworkers and supervisors would benefit

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from additional data support, as well as evaluate potential organizational changes that could facilitate more effective monitoring and analysis. For example, when educational outcomes change, or law enforcement actions

occur in families, these data could alert a team to consider reassessment or inform the next review rather than solely rely on workers to notice the change in circumstance themselves.

By developing a plan that incorporates these suggestions into your procurement strategy, you are poised to harness the full potential of CCWIS. Even if CCWIS projects are underway, it isn't too late to take advantage of the benefits of a focus on capacity. Your agency will better manage case flow and deliver improved outcomes. Remember: While CCWIS innovations hold significant promise, driving improved outcomes isn't about development techniques. It's about an enduring focus on increasing capacity to improve the lives of the clients you serve. 

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