

California Department of Child Support
Services

California Child Support Automated System

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CALIFORNIA
Department of Child Support Services 

Executive Summary

The goal of the California Child Support Automated System (CCSAS) Project was to create a single statewide Child Support system capable of providing high quality cost-effective services to California's demographically diverse and mobile population. Fully implemented, the system enables the State to aggressively pursue program performance goals making it easier for program partners involved with delivery of child support services to participate in enforcement activities.

CCSAS utilizes an expansive set of software and hardware tools to meet federal requirements for statewide child support enforcement (CSE) systems. Through a combination of commercial off-the-shelf systems software with open source software and programming frameworks, CCSAS relies on an extensive computer network spanning the geographic distance of California.

In June 2007, the Department of Child Support Services under the California Health and Human Services Agency started the first of 16 planned rollouts of the CCSAS application was completed for three California counties. As of October 2008, CCSAS was implemented in 57 of 58 counties comprising 72% of CA child support caseload. In November 2008, California completed implementation in all 58 counties

The replacement of six consortia-based systems serving 58 counties and multiple auxiliary systems by CCSAS enables California to aggressively pursue program performance goals. The benefits include:

- Increased performance, caseworker efficiency and effectiveness, and quality of delivered services
- Improved data quality and privacy, inter-jurisdictional case processing efficiency, and interactions with County Courts and the Judicial Council
- Reduced burden on employers and financial institutions complying with Child Support enforcement actions
- Meets Federal requirements relieving California of federal penalties in excess of \$200 million per year
- Statewide standardization of Child Support Program policies and services
- Maximize the ease of system maintenance and enhancement while preserving the cost effectiveness of an automated system

In addition, customers have experienced a significant improvement to the quality and consistency of services. Achieving these goals while increasing collection of child support payments due to families and children to over \$2 billion annually, has made a difference in the lives of those dependent upon Child Support services.

Description of Business Problem

The CCSAS Project Charter established strategic business and technology goals to serve as foundational principles and guidelines for creating a single statewide Child Support (CS) system capable of providing high quality cost-effective services to California's demographically diverse and mobile population.

The absence of a single statewide Child Support System left unfulfilled a number of strategic and operational benefits, including:

- California did not meet federal Child Support requirements, and had not met these requirements since the federal deadline of October 1, 1997. Being out of compliance penalized California in excess of \$200 million per year.
- Coordination between the state's Department of Child Support Services and the 58 county child support agencies was not standard leading to an increased risk of low-quality data and security breaches, sub-optimal inter-jurisdictional case processing efficiency, and poor interaction between DCSS and its partners (County courts, Judicial Council, County Child Support agencies.)
- Enforcement actions pursued through employers and financial institutions were sub-optimal.
- Performance, caseworker's efficiency and quality of delivered services were sub-optimal and unnecessarily burdened.

These specific problems, stemming from the lack of a statewide Child Support system hindered DCSS in achieving its goal of continuously increasing collection of child support payments due to families and children to more than \$2 billion annually, representing a consequential hindrance of services provided to the children and families in California's more than 1.7 million Child Support cases.

Solution

CCSAS utilizes an expansive set of software and hardware tools to meet federal requirements for statewide child support enforcement (CSE) systems. Through a combination of commercial off-the-shelf systems software with open source software and programming frameworks, CCSAS relies on an extensive computer network spanning the geographic distance of California. The CSE is a multi-tiered, multi-layered, web browser application using Microsoft Internet Explorer as the human interface with an Apache Web Server.

The application is developed using the JAVA EE programming language inside IBM's suite of Rational tools. Hyperion and Adobe products are used for creating and viewing reports and forms. DB2 is used for both the relational database and the data warehouse; IBM's Content Manager is used to store and retrieve scanned image files;

IBM's Tivoli Workload Scheduler helps us manage the batch schedule; and IBM's Tivoli Access Manager and WebSEAL are used to secure the application and provide authentication, authorization, data security and centralized resource capability management.

At the eBusiness Hosting Center (eBHC), the hardware infrastructure includes ten load balanced IBM UNIX servers running in a secured clustered environment. A wide area network (WAN) connects the eBHC to the local area networks (LAN) of the 52 Local Child Support Agencies in 58 California counties. The CSE system is both an internal intranet application used by over 8,000 statewide child support case workers, and an external outward facing self-service internet application used by child support case members, with an estimated million or more users when fully implemented.

Uniqueness of the Solution

In addition to providing multiple jurisdictions with a single statewide Child Support Service, the CCSAS also represented a number of "first" for California, forever altering how constituents of the DCSS interact with the department and its county analogs.

- The first web-based application of its kind in the United States to support achievement of Federal Child Support Performance Measures.
- The first Child Support system in California to enable case workers statewide view and update access to California's 1.7 million active cases.
- Services are available to case members from any child support agency in California – members are no longer restricted to their county agency to obtain services.
- Case members have access to review and update their case information via the Internet. Features include updating contact information, making a payment, reviewing disbursement history, setting up direct deposit or requesting an electronic payment card for those without access to bank services. Each of these functions previously required contact with an assigned local agency.
- Employers have the ability to update their contact information and make payments via the web instead of through each local child support agency.

Communication

In order to achieve buy-in, program stakeholders were engaged to help define what features and functions would deliver the best value in the a new statewide system. Participants included local caseworkers, case members, program professionals and advocates, employers, financial institutions, interface partners, and the courts. Each group was given the opportunity to provide input and be educated on the benefits of the new system.

Additionally, outreach was performed through focused interactive forums, mailings, posters, public service announcements, public forums, the DCSS website, and Interactive Voice Response Unit. Significant user training efforts were conducted in formal classroom sessions, via webcast, and in specialized “boot camps” to ensure that users understood how the new system supported their work functions and activities. Ongoing forums continue to provide specific outreach and education for CCSAS users and stakeholders as needed.

Rollout

The CCSAS Project replaced six consortia-based systems serving 58 counties and multiple auxiliary systems. These systems contained massive amounts of data that had to be converted to the new application--approximately two terabytes of case data. The collection and disbursement processing performed locally was discontinued and replaced by a single statewide collection and disbursement processing facility. That dedicated central facility processes over 600,000 payments and disburses an average of \$105 million each month. More than 40% of all disbursements are made electronically, including use of an Electronic Payment Card for members without bank accounts. Two million case identifiers were assigned, requiring contact with case members and employers, and synchronization with interface partners. Broadband services were expanded, new hardware for over 8,000 caseworkers were installed, and training was delivered on the system, processes and procedures. Each activity was performed iteratively for each implementation “wave” with minimal interruption to service delivery statewide.

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Significance

More than 8,000 CCSAS caseworkers now have immediate, real time access to essential statewide child support data allowing them to provide services to case members anywhere, anytime. In addition to the improved customer services, caseworkers can now review multiple cases involving the same members across multiple counties and therefore take the appropriate actions fully informed of the historical and present situation surrounding the specific case participants.

The public benefits from a program able to uniformly respond to inquiries and resolve issues timely and more cost effectively and provides a source of revenue to the state's General Fund for re-payment of welfare assistance. Increased collections results in more monies getting to needy children and families at a substantially increased level. These benefits are achieved through to a set of highly integrated case and financial management functions capable of automatically initiating enforcement actions, alerting the case worker to tasks requiring immediate attention, and proportionately allocating and distributing collections when a member has multiple cases. Federal and State leaders now have better access to the data needed to manage and continuously improve program performance and maximize federal incentive funding tied to program performance improvement.

Specific Beneficiaries

CCSAS benefits all child support program participants and stakeholders by providing a statewide view of the diverse caseload population. Prior to CCSAS multiple case members had multiple cases in multiple counties and no ability to view, coordinate or consolidate case activities across the multiple cases. This resulted in duplicative work, erroneous information and inappropriate enforcement actions occurring resulting in negative customer satisfaction and providing fodder for advocacy groups and negative media. Specific benefactors include:

- 1.4 million Families, representing 2 million children.
- More than 8,000 state and local child support workers
- Financial institutions
- Employers
- Family Law Courts
- Locate service partners
- Interface partners
- Other States

Benefit of the Project

The CCSAS Statewide System provides a fully functional system that meets all federal certification requirements and State requirements. Under CCSAS, the State avoids paying federal penalties (\$200+ million per year) for having a federally certified statewide automated Child Support Enforcement System in place. The more robust enforcement framework provided by CCSAS contributes to increased levels of collections for families and other States with whom California has reciprocal enforcement agreements. System maintenance and operational costs will be reduced compared to maintaining and operating six consortia-based systems supporting 58

individual county operations. Ease of use of the web-based application will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of over 8,000 caseworkers.

Additional enhancements are planned to enable California's Child Support Program to cease reliance on the replaced decentralized legacy systems for closed case history and imaged artifacts. These legacy systems will be retired and the State avoids escalating costs associated with maintenance of multiple legacy data repositories. Enhanced functionality will improve program performance and increase California's ability to compete for Federal performance incentive funding.

The adoption of the CCSAS by all 58 California counties has these specific benefits:

- Consistent application of statewide program, policies and procedures across all California counties has resulted in fewer customer complaints.
- Local Child Support Agencies now have a consistent view into uniform data throughout the State resulting in better customer service and improved case processing, especially for members with multiple cases.
- Customers may now self-serve to meet many of their routine needs. This reduces the time and burden on the customers as well as the case worker.
- The State passed a month-long Federal Certification Review in June 2008 resulting in \$190 million reimbursement to the state General Fund.
- Interface partners have one common interface with child support instead of multiple interfaces with multiple consortia systems.
- Centralized collection of child support payments provides for the allocation and distribution of funds across all cases based on federal regulations that were not possible without a statewide system.
- Local child support agencies can provide services for other local agencies impacted by natural disaster, employee job actions, or workload spikes without having to physically be in the impacted county office(s) to provide assistance.
- Central printing and mass mailing functionality provides for the economy of scale for statewide postage costs.