



PA CHILD SUPPORT PORTAL
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

Nominating Category: DATA, INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Nominator

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Executive Summary

In Pennsylvania, roughly 1 in 10 people are involved in the Department of Public Welfare's Child Support Enforcement Program. They include custodial parents, non-custodial parents, their children, and employers of non-custodial parents. Traditionally, the only means for these participants to ask questions or update their information was to either call or visit a local Domestic Relations office. These, along with individuals failing to show-up at scheduled hearings and other proceedings, presented a significant administrative and time burden to case workers and detracted from their other duties.

With the commonwealth recognizing customer service as an important component of program administration, it also became evident that customer "self service" needed to be included as part of the overall approach. The question then was: How can accurate, timely, and meaningful information be made available to child support customers in a cost-effective manner while still providing personalized service to each individual customer?

The solution was to provide citizens with a comprehensive "one stop" portal for 24x7 child support customer service and information delivery. This information must be consistent across communication channels such as integrated voice recognition, customer help desk, and Web self service.

By reducing the need for case workers to spend time answering common questions, they are able to focus their efforts on locating absent parents, establishing orders, and monitoring order compliance. By improving data accuracy, they also spend less time trying to locate clients. Further, the burden on other social service programs has been reduced by having the non-custodial parent pay for a child's well being and medical insurance at the same time. Employers are able to provide accurate information about non-custodial parents, enabling faster income attachment which leads to increased payments to support recipients. These improvements in service have helped Pennsylvania become the leading child support program in the country.

The Benefits

Improved customer service, easier access to information, empowerment of customers and reduced costs.

The Realized Return on Investment

- \$1,217,513.50 saved due to customer demographic updates
- Approximately \$15 million saved through reduced numbers of "no shows" to appointments
- Approximately \$350,000 saved due to money being released to recipients

Project Description

The Business Challenge

The business challenge facing the Department of Public Welfare was determining how to make accurate, timely, and meaningful information available in a cost-effective manner while still providing personalized service to each individual customer.

The primary information system supporting Pennsylvania's child support program is a large and complex application built on proprietary mainframe technology. This system is accessible by trained state and county workers, system programmers, designers, and system administrators. However, it was nearly impossible to provide customers with a secure and easy-to-use interface to find information about their cases. Their only way to call or visit their local Domestic Relations office. This forced case workers to spend a significant amount of their time answering routine customer service requests rather than more meaningful case work, like locating absent parents, establishing orders, and monitoring order compliance.

The Child Support Portal Solution

The answer to this problem is the Child Support Website (CSWS) and its related applications. The CSWS is more than a website – it is a suite of tools and applications. The CSWS includes a data repository optimized for reporting/inquiry, a secure web-based application which can be accessed by child support customers and business partners, an interactive voice response (IVR) system which provides much of the same information over the phone and also makes outbound reminder calls for upcoming appointments with Domestic Relations case workers, as well as a number of worker-facing reporting applications/ interfaces. This suite of applications provides customers with a comprehensive “one stop” information portal for 24x7 information delivery and customer service through the telephone or Internet.

Within the application suite is an administrative application that allows the help desk to view the contact history of individual customers. Accompanying business processes and access methods serve to integrate these tools so that customers, case workers, and business partners can all share the same information seamlessly. It also presents the information contained in the mainframe in a manner accessible to users with limited knowledge of all the complexities of the child support program.

The CSWS provides seven different views of information extracted from the mainframe. These include views for those paying child support, those receiving child support, employers who are required to deduct funds from employee paychecks to pay their child



support obligations, liens searchers who wish to research arrearage information, docket searchers who need to know details of the court docket, and information for the general public, including information for Spanish speaking clients.

The CSWS is a robust and interactive set of tools for customers, workers, and business partners. The CSWS allows clients to enable “E-reminders” to alert them via email of upcoming court dates, when their payments are due, money that is being held by the commonwealth due to an incorrect address, and more. The CSWS also allows users to update personal information such as their address, date of birth, phone number and email address. Allowing clients to update their own information alone has taken a significant burden off of case workers, at a rate of roughly 400 data entries a day. Child support recipients can update their own information and give “tips” about the current location of non-custodial parents. Employers are able to manage their contact information online, helping to ensure that billing coupons and income attachments are mailed to the correct addresses. They can also manage their current employees paying child support. Keeping this information current allows for faster income withholding, which results in more money to children and families.

Operational Timeframes

The Child Support portal was implemented in June of 2002 and is growing by the day. Several employer enhancements were added in July 2008.

Project Significance

By giving parents, employers, lien and docket users easy access to information through the CSWS, the commonwealth has been able to reduce its costs and improve data accuracy, which in turn led to an increase in funds from the federal government and reduced the burden on other social services.

✓ **Improved Cost Efficiency**

The CSWS helps the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania save money by eliminating the need for expensive call centers. Additionally, giving clients access to their own information has allowed Domestic Relations case workers to focus their time on proactive casework like fulfilling children’s medical and financial needs. This has also reduced lines and wait times within Domestic Relations offices. E-reminders and IVR outbound calls have also helped to reduce cost. About 4 million E-reminders have been sent to remind participants of scheduled hearings and appointments. Since its go-live earlier this year, IVR outbound calls have been made to 115,000 plaintiffs and defendants resulting in fewer “no-shows” for hearings. These initiatives have significantly improved case processing and reduced the number of rescheduled events.

✓ **Data Accuracy**



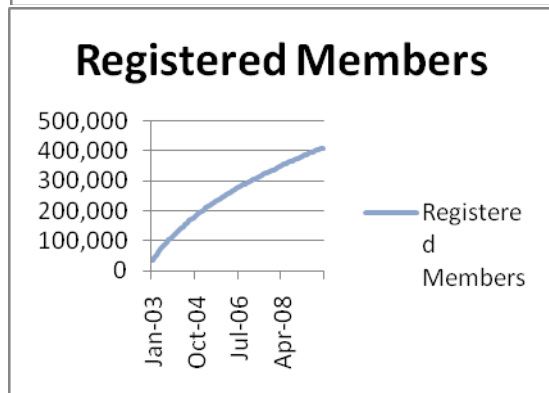
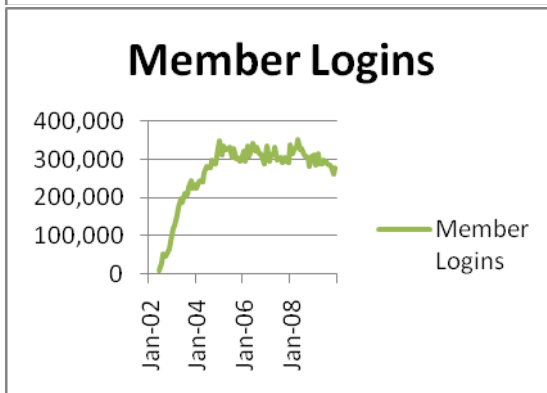
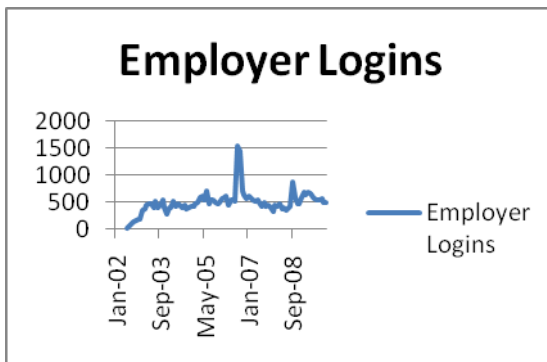
Currently, roughly \$11 million is being held by the commonwealth due to information needing to be updated in the system so the money can be disbursed. As such, data accuracy is vital to the smooth operation of the Child Support Enforcement Program. Since the CSWS began allowing members and employers to update their own information, over 350,000 addresses have been updated, which has allowed the commonwealth to release roughly \$1 million. Allowing child support recipients to submit tips improves operations by allowing Domestic Relations case workers to target their search of delinquent non-custodial parents. This is also supplemented by employers being able to update information on their employees paying child support.

✓ **Increased Performance = Increased Federal Funding**

The majority of funding for state child support enforcement programs comes from the federal government and is distributed based on state performance. Although a multitude of factors are considered in this calculation, one major factor is the amount of money collected versus the amount of money disbursed. Since the CSWS has helped reduce the amount of money being held, it has also helped to increase funding to the program.

✓ **Reduce Burden on other Program Offices**

Roughly 20 percent of child support cases involve some other form of social service, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Food Stamps, CHIP, etc. Having non-custodial parents pay their child support (which often also includes provisions for paying medical insurance) reduces the burden on the state to pay for these social services.



The graphs above display the increased usage of the CSWS since its inception.

Project Benefits

Estimation of Cost and Return on Investment for the Child Support Website application

Most of the services provided by the CSWS provide intangible benefits, making it difficult to accurately quantify an accurate return on investment figure. Despite this, measurable benefits realized by CSWS can be categorized in two ways:

1. Increased collections as a result of the CSWS
2. Other tangible benefits realized by different features of the CSWS

1. Increased collections to Pennsylvania's Child Support Enforcement Program as a result of the CSWS Employer-Tip feature

On average, an extra \$3.5 million is collected each year as a direct result of wage attachments, which were done as a result of "tips" (giving information about a non-custodial parent's employment) received in the CSWS. An average of \$3 million is then disbursed due to this information. With this as a yearly average, the total money collected and disbursed as wage attachments due to the "tips" feature of the CSWS equals:

$$\begin{aligned} \$3,500,000 \text{ per year} * 7 \text{ years} &= \mathbf{\$24,500,000 \text{ collected}} \\ \$3,000,000 \text{ per year} * 7 \text{ years} &= \mathbf{\$21,000,000 \text{ disbursed}} \end{aligned}$$

2. Other tangible benefits realized by different features of the CSWS

A. Updates to demographic information

Parents and employers have made over 350,000 updates to their own demographic information over the lifespan of the CSWS.

Assuming it takes a worker 10 minutes (0.167 hours) per update (involves worker's time on the phone, processing mail, taking action in the system and verifying data entry), this would result in 58,450 hours saved. Assuming a blended salary of workers of \$40,000/year for 1,920 working hours (37.5 hours per week x 52 weeks), would equal an average hourly wage of \$20.83/hour

$$\mathbf{\text{Total Savings: } 58,450 \text{ hours saved} * \$20.83 \text{ pay per hour} = \mathbf{\$1,217,513.50}}$$

B. Decreased no-show rate

Litigants associated with a case are required to participate in court hearings to determine the correct course of action related to a case including: modification of payment amounts, custody of the child, etc. When a litigant fails to appear at a hearing, it costs the commonwealth money. To date, over 4 million E-reminders have been sent regarding hearings.

Assuming approximately 25% of those E-reminders resulted in prevention of no-show, that would be 1 million no-show preventions. Assuming each no-show that is prevented saved 45 minutes (0.75 hours) (includes worker's time, updating the system, delay in court proceedings, etc.) and, again assuming an average hourly worker wage of \$20.83 (\$40,000 blended salary divided by 1,920 work hours per year), the total savings would be:

Total Savings: $1,000,000 * 0.75 * \$20.83 = \$15,622,500$

C. Money released to the families because of the website:

This is the money that is held by the state due to invalid addresses for child support participants. Case workers are required to reach out to these individuals so that this money can be released. Releasing more money helps improve performance measures for the state, which in turn brings additional federal funding to the program.

Total Money released = \$1 million to 90,000 families that updated their addresses in CSWS

D. Total money saved in communication and postage costs:

Assuming: One piece of mail followed up by one phone call

Assuming: Postage of \$0.42 per piece of mail and 10 minutes of worker time

Assuming: 10 minutes (0.167 hours) per update (involves worker's time on the phone, processing mail, taking action in system, verifying data entry)

Assume a blended salary of workers of \$40,000/year. $\$40,000/1,920$ working hours per year = \$20.83/ hour

= $90,000 * 0.42 = \$37,800$ in postage savings

= $90,000 * 0.167 = 15,030$ hours saved since implementation

Total Savings: $15,030 * \$20.83 + \$37,800 = \$350,875$

D. Total tangible benefits calculations

Total cost of implementing the application: ~ **\$ 7,000,000**

Total tangible benefit gained (sum of all the above): ~ **\$ 17,000,000**

ROI: 243%