

2014 NASCIO AWARD SUBMISSION

Digital Government: Government to Citizen (G to C) Category

Tennessee Dept. of Children's Services
Resource Parent Verification Portal

September 2012 to January 2013

The Tennessee Department of Children's Services' Resource Parent Verification Portal is a more accurate and time-saving option for reporting dates of service as a foster parent. The new, web-based service is an alternative to the "Phone-in" system, which was the only method to submit dates for receiving the funds that assist foster families in providing food, shelter, and clothing for foster children.

Since its launch, over 75% of the foster parents who have verified children in their home have done so online. The service, which can be accessed with a mobile device, allows for a quicker, more convenient, and more accurate verification than the "Phone-in" system.

Almost all of those who have already used the new system said that they intend to verify online in the future. With continued increase in use, the Department of Children's Services anticipates that the Resource Parent Verification Portal will improve the accuracy and delivery of funds with a measurable reduction in administrative costs.

BUSINESS PROBLEM

Foster parents were required to call into the “Phone In” system on either the 1st or 15th of the month to report the dates of service they provided for each foster child in their home during that time period.

If foster parents miss their dates, they’re provided a second attempt approximately two days later. Payments to the foster parents are automatically delayed if they do not complete the “Phone-In” process on time.

The “Phone-In” system required numerous manually-keyed entries, such as social security numbers and dates, It was complicated and prone to error due to incorrect entries or inconsistent cellular connectivity – a problem as many families now have only a cell phone. The ID numbers and dates had to be entered on the phone’s number pad, significantly increasing the potential for error.

Correcting errors in data submission involved multiple division employees and may result in delay of the much needed payments.

The “Phone-In” system required agency staff to manually move data from phone-in software to the department backend software.

SOLUTION

A web application that helps agency increase receipt and accuracy of monthly information from foster parents. Move the “Phone-In” system to the web and replicate and extend current functionality.

Provide a very concise and intuitive application that will allow foster parents to verify the case information of a single child or multiple children in their care with on a single screen and accessible with mobile devices.

Once logged in, the foster parent is presented with the identification information for children in their care. They complete the start and end dates of the verification period and submit. The system returns a confirmation, reducing previous concerns about successful processing and eliminating the need for repeated follow ups.

DEMO: <https://testapps.tn.gov/prototypes/fpv/>

SECTION 4: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT

The Resource Parent Verification Portal is one tangible implementation of Governor Haslam's drive for Tennessee to be a "Customer-Focused Government." The goal was to improve the citizens' interaction with the Dept. of Children's Services and offer convenience and consistency.

Streamlining the foster parents' overall process of receiving payments is only the first phase of what is strategically envisioned to be a multi-phased program. Future changes will streamline the process to be more effective for the agency staff, as well as the future enhancements for the foster parent.

SECTION 5: BENEFIT OF THE PROJECT

Since its launch, the new service has received over 1,900 user survey responses that indicate that it is a success for foster parents. Of the responses, 96% percent reported that it was much easier and it saved them 10-15 minutes over the phone-in system. It's also very convenient as it uses a responsive design framework, so it's optimized for handhelds and foster parents can use it just about anywhere.

The use of the web application has also reduced submission errors by approximately 75%, and reduced unnamed hours for agency staff to correct them. Not only does fewer errors improve payment delivery, it also frees agency staff for proactive, rather than reactive, work.

The new web application connects directly to the department backend software, eliminating the manual upload and saving about 1,000 manhours per year.

Finally, replacing the "Phone-in" system eliminated the \$400 hourly rate for IVR services and over \$15,000 in annual system maintenance costs. The web application was developed for just over \$65,000 and will see 100% ROI in just under 2 years.