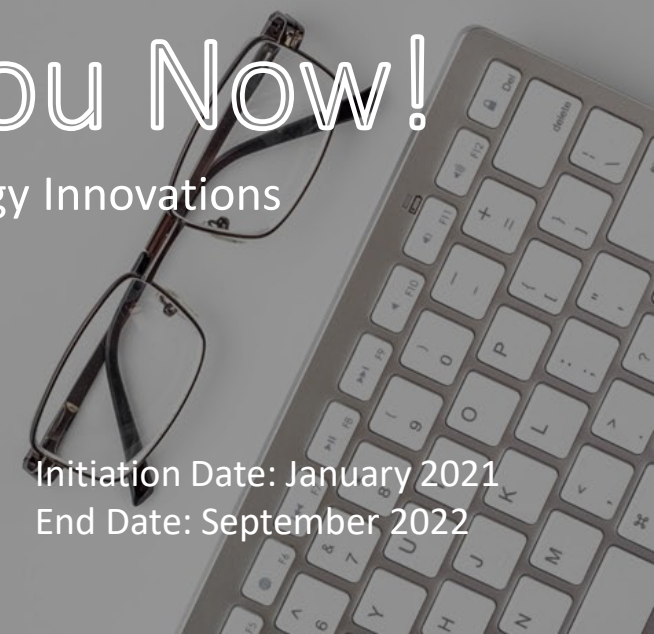


We Can Hear You Now!

Information Communications Technology Innovations

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Executive Summary

The Illinois Department of Innovation & Technology (DoIT) is continually working to improve and innovate technology solutions provided to state agencies for telecommunications services. The Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) utilizes these services and often tasks DoIT with requests to expand its portfolio of service offerings to improve DHS' ability to provide services to claimants. DHS advised DoIT of a need for a statewide call center solution to provide Illinois residents one phone number to connect to DHS that would allow all DHS offices throughout the state to improve call control and customer interaction through technology improvements.

DoIT evaluated the request from DHS with a holistic view and provided DHS with a two-phased approach to the project. Phase 1 allowed for additional DHS call center Interactive Voice Response (IVR) to be combined into a centralized number and additional DHS offices converted to VoIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) phone services. Once Phase 1 was completed, Phase 2 began with specific coordination between DHS local offices and DoIT project leads. All the DHS office locations were moved to the contact center solution. Their main number was incorporated into the statewide IVR number bringing them into the call center, multiple offices at a time. The cadence proved very beneficial in using resources for training and transition efforts to complete the project milestones quickly and effectively. During Phase 2, all office locations were converted to Jabber softphones to work remotely and login to the contact center environment. Live training for all contact center agents was conducted remotely via Webex. This method proved very beneficial as coordination of onsite trainings at multiple locations would be time consuming and increase costs to DHS. Once training was completed for an office, they went live using Finesse and Jabber within two days and DoIT provided technical support as needed.

Overall, DoIT's project approach and solutions provided allowed for a completely remote supported project with multiple trainings, go-lives, and support sessions without the need to schedule in person meetings at a physical location. This approach allowed DoIT to deliver telecommunication and IT solutions that improved DHS' ability to provide services to Illinois residents.

Idea

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a historic number of Illinois residents utilized the services of DHS ranging from food support and childcare assistance to cash benefits and rehabilitation services. DHS has multiple regional office locations throughout Illinois that support residents in receiving assistance from DHS by phone or walk in office appointments. The DHS Family Community Resource Center (FCRC) offices were receiving a high volume of calls daily to each office throughout the state. Residents were actively calling to apply for benefits and services but were unable to get through due to the large call volume and the offices' use of hunt group phone solutions and voicemail. The larger offices were receiving 2,500 calls a day and were unable to keep up with caseloads and management of needs. The lack of timely response to their phone calls and voicemails led to residents feeling like they had no choice but to show up at the DHS offices in person, which only compounded issues with overcrowding and wait times in office lobbies.

DHS reached out to DoIT for assistance with the smaller DHS office locations, seeking a resolution to the issues of calls going into the office and not enough staff or technology to properly control and provide adequate assistance to the callers. DHS already had a few call centers in place utilizing DoIT's contact center solutions for other services they offer and understood the benefits of the DoIT call center solutions for other areas of their agency. It was vital to find a solution to assist the local DHS offices with incoming calls and caseloads. There was a deficit in the way the DHS office locations could handle incoming calls due to using hunt groups and voicemail.

As the State continued to navigate the pandemic, DoIT and DHS worked to convert local offices to the enterprise VoIP solution, which then allowed for the implementation of a statewide Interactive Voice Response (IVR) contact center. The statewide solution allowed for incoming calls to be routed to a single IVR for all callers. Advanced IVR capabilities allowed callers to speak or enter information on their phone keypad to bring up their file in the DHS internal system. When the caller made selections in the IVR, either by voice or keypad, the system was programmed to recognize the geographic location of the caller and automatically route the caller to the appropriate DHS office location for assistance if assistance could not be obtained by the IVR integration giving them information on the caller's case with DHS.

Implementation

The project for the statewide IVR contact center began in early 2021. DoIT worked with its VoIP integrator, Presidio, to identify a solution, which was accepted by DHS. DHS had recently started the conversion of all office telephone systems to VoIP technology providing an opportunity to dramatically improve Illinois' ability to provide more responsive and effective customer service. With the technological infrastructure now in place to support a centralized telephonic statewide IVR contact center the creation of a statewide system allowed the State to maximize staff productivity and ensured that calls were routed to a person who can quickly and adequately address the issue.

Previously, the DHS FCRC office locations throughout the state were using hunt groups that did not allow adequate call distribution and call routing to the appropriate office location for the resident's case to be resolved. The resident often would not know the field office they needed to contact for their case. The caller would leave voicemail messages at various locations that DHS staff would then have to return and identify if that office could assist or what office location the customer should be redirected to. This was an ineffective and time-consuming process for both the resident and DHS staff. The implementation of the statewide IVR contact center provided a solution for the resident to interact with the IVR and receive quick routing to the appropriate office location where they could be assisted by a live agent.

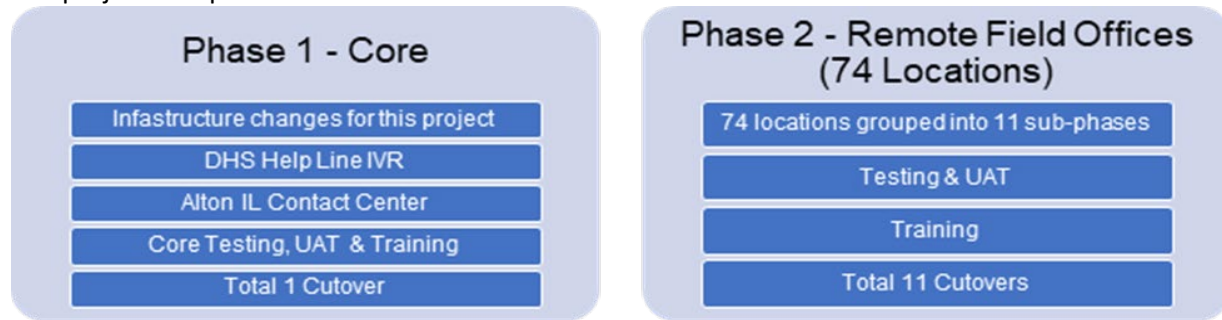


DHS FCRC Office Locations

The project objectives were to:

- Reduce operational cost and improve resident engagement through streamlining how the current DHS Help Line IVR functions.
- Retrieve customer information within the system and use the information to efficiently route callers to the appropriate DHS location under a single contact center platform (Cisco UCCE/CVP IVR).
- Migrate 3,500 DHS employees at 75 office locations to this Cisco UCCE/CVP IVR platform from the current CUCM/Unity based routing using a phased approach using a total of 11 cutovers.

The project two-phase breakout:



- Phase 1: Deployed the new IVR routing changes and bring the Alton, Illinois Call Center online. In this phase, Presidio implemented the IVR design changes. The Alton location was brought online and the FCRC calls were routed to this center. Remote field office calls were still routed to the existing hunt groups.
- Phase 2: Migrated the remaining 74 remote FCRC field locations. DoIT and DHS used a “Tiger Team” approach to support the cutover and go-live efforts with the teams containing a mix of DoIT, DHS and Presidio resources. The Tiger Team deployed remotely for each go-live region for the week of go-live and supported the go-live efforts for all the sites within that region. This phase involved 11 individual cutovers.

Impact

With the statewide IVR contact center solution, DoIT and DHS took advantage of the full capabilities of DoIT’s VoIP technology by establishing a single hotline with a statewide routing system and a call center focused on effectively serving residents. The routing system connects the new case management call center, an existing call center, and the local offices. This technology replaced the previous, unsustainable process and allowed DHS to better meet customer needs more quickly over the phone. In addition, prior to the VoIP installation, DHS had no way to monitor data about incoming call volumes, hang-ups, and other key metrics that could assist in resource allocation decisions. The previous solution had some phone call data available, yet there was not a standardized process for extracting, analyzing, and distributing this data. A key component of this project was the acquisition and utilization of technology that allows managers to review reports in real-time, monitor effectiveness, and allocate resources appropriately to meet demand.

The solution features that were implemented for improvement include:

- Jabber Softphone
Agents work remotely on the statewide IVR contact center using laptops and headsets. This was invaluable during the pandemic recovery and is still in place today.
- Finesse Agent/Supervisor login (daily)

The Finesse Call Center system allows for each DHS call center agent to login daily and report on calls received and details of the calls such as duration, case and resident information and call resolution time. Supervisors were also given logins to provide support and guidance to agents by viewing each agent supervised Finesse login daily. Supervisors were also able to create and receive reports to monitor how each office was handling calls.

- **Cisco Reporting and Dashboard**
This functionality allowed for near real-time view of all office queues and call agents logged in and answering calls. This feature assisted DHS supervisors with coordinating agent resources in each office. All offices were given individual office queue details as well as an entire statewide report for supervisor review and visibility. The dashboards can be shared among management, providing visibility on call queues and details on call handling.
- **Screen Pop**
The integration with a DHS database allows the call center agent to speak with caller and have all information brought to the Finesse screen preparing them for the caller and case information needed.
- **Telephonic Signature**
Telephonic signature uses recording software to record the caller's acknowledgement of who they are and the services they are accepting to provide customer validation and consent for case compliance.
- **Agent Greeting**
New functionality allows a contact center agent to record a greeting and then automatically play it to the caller and agent at the same time when a new call is answered by the agent. The agent greeting playback is immediately followed by connecting the caller to the agent.
- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Messages**
FAQ messaging added into the queue's wait messaging helped to resolve phone calls without requiring an agent's assistance.
- **Courtesy Callback**
A callback will be offered that allows the caller to input their contact information for a callback when an agent becomes available. The position in the queue for callback is saved and when the caller's position is answered, the callback is initiated by the Unified Contact Center Enterprise (UCCE) callback system. This functionality is a convenience to callers by eliminating their need to wait on hold.

Prior to the implementation of the statewide IVR the DHS FCRC local offices were receiving on average 25,000 calls throughout their statewide regional office locations daily. The majority of calls were going unanswered due to lack of staffing and technology limitations. The current statewide IVR allows for callers to be placed in queue for an available agent or handle their questions through the IVR selections integrated within the DHS system. This solution has decreased call volumes and increased productivity for each office location.

After the implementation of the statewide IVR contact center, data shows in one business day the statewide IVR receives 78,673 calls. Of those calls, the average handle time is 12 minutes. Such handling

time was an unknown in the previous local office phone systems. This data enables DHS to transfer work loads from busy office locations to another area or team in the statewide IVR. These stats also give DHS a high-level view of calls being received and staffing needs. The data alone provided by the new solution gives DHS visibility into how customers are reaching out to them and how DHS is responding.

These new services assisted in reducing the amount of time residents spend waiting on a phone or in an office lobby. In addition to dramatically improving the quality of customer service, this solution allows DHS to actively respond to customer issues and needs before they reach crisis level and has had significant positive downstream effects on application processing, case maintenance, redetermination, and lobby operations. Overall, this project transformed the way DHS managed caseloads and resulted in marked improvements in customer service, reducing the amount of time Illinois residents spend waiting on a phone or in an office lobby.