

Illinois PAC Bot: Accelerating Care for Youth

Operational Efficiency

State of Illinois
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Initiation Date: 10.01.2023
End Date: 02.15.2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has effectively run and managed a comprehensive and predominantly home-grown child welfare system for more than thirty years. The system maintained the data on children and families served by the agency, but the time had come to update or replace the system.

IllinoisConnect is the new and modern web-based system for child welfare workers, representing a comprehensive update to the policies and processes foundational to running the entire agency. It is truly transformational and a new generation of function – one of the most important support structures for the children of Illinois in a generation. The new modular and all-inclusive application will provide high-quality case management data that is easily analyzed, distributed, and used by workers, supervisors, administrators, researchers, and policymakers. The entire system, including all modules, will be implemented in a phased approach over the next several years.

The Psychotropic Medication Consent Bot (PAC Bot), a tool in the IllinoisConnect system, utilizes Robotic Process Automation (RPA) technology to improve processing efficiencies and provide in-care youth with the critical medications and care they need in a timely and accurate manner. This automated solution significantly reduces manual work, allowing employees to focus on more value-add tasks, bringing relief to an overburdened office, and reducing wait times for in-care youth to receive their medications. PAC Bot has been assisting the unit since its initial deployment in August 2023.

To date, PAC Bot has served 5,490 youth in care and processed over 22,000 consents, dramatically streamlining a critical function within DCFS. A key achievement of the PAC Bot is the reallocation of over 5,040 manual processing hours annually. This substantial reduction in manual data entry has led to an 80% reduction in wait times, ensuring that youth in care receive necessary medication an average of 27 hours faster. This accelerated access to medication is vital and significantly mitigates the risk of critical medication and dosage errors.

Beyond the quantifiable time savings and improved access to care, PAC Bot has brought a host of other benefits to DCFS. It has eliminated the backlog of pending psychotropic medication consent requests, a critical issue that previously caused delays. The system also contributes to a reduction of non-urgent hotline calls by effectively distributing consent documentation to relevant DCFS business units. Furthermore, PAC Bot has enabled improved tracking and record keeping of completed consents, leading to more accurate reporting metrics and enhanced oversight.

The positive effects extend to the DCFS workforce as well, with 100% of users reporting that PAC Bot made their role easier and more efficient. This direct impact on daily tasks has contributed to increased employee morale and job satisfaction, fostering a more productive and engaged environment.

IDEA

The Office of the DCFS Guardian is charged with the oversight and guardianship of the State of Illinois' youth in care. Its scope of duties includes reviewing all requests pertaining to a youth's care, including medical care and prescription drugs. Through the psychotropic medication consent process, the Office of

the DCFS Guardian assesses and approves/denies requests from a clinician to prescribe psychotropic medication to an in-care youth. That decision is then communicated to appropriate stakeholders.

Processing the more than 1,000 consents received monthly quickly and accurately is imperative to protecting the welfare of some of Illinois' most vulnerable residents. However, DCFS workers performed the processing manually and were required to reference multiple documents and systems for each request. As they moved data from one document or system to another via copy and paste or manual entry, opportunity for errors was introduced. Errors in this process could result in medical consequences, as incorrect medications or dosages could be approved.

PAC Bot automates over 70% of a 55-step process, validating in-care youth legal status, reconciling, creating, and moving files, drafting the formal consent, distributing signed consents via email and fax, and sending automated email notifications, thus keeping all stakeholders apprised of the consent request status. The solution reallocates hundreds of manual processing hours per month to value-add tasks and reduces wait times for in-care youth to receive critical medications in a timely manner.

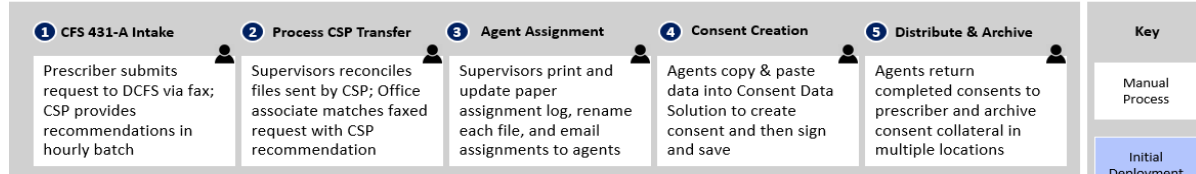
PAC Bot is the first of its kind at DCFS. The cloud-hosted RPA is directly in-line with several State CIO Top 10 Priorities including *(1) Digital Government/ Digital Services by speeding time to critical medical services for some of Illinois' most vulnerable residents, (3) Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning/ Robotic Process Automation by leveraging RPA to automate a complex workflow, (5) Workforce by reimagining how Guardian Consent workers complete the process and engage with technology, and (9) Cloud Services via a multi-tenant scalable AWS cloud architecture.*

IMPLEMENTATION

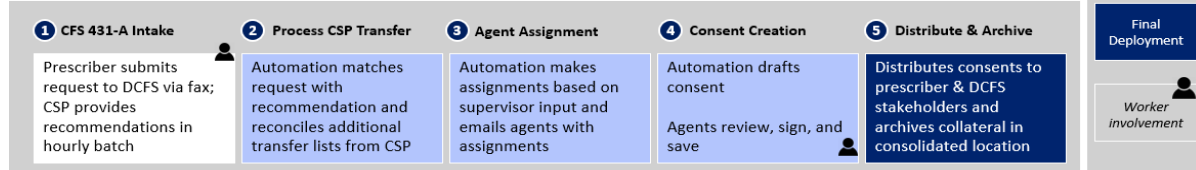
PAC Bot was able to be seamlessly integrated into the DCFS Guardian Consent Unit process, providing immediate relief, while other IllinoisConnect modules were in development. The implementation for this effort included a collaboration between DCFS and the Illinois Department of Innovation & Technology (DoIT). The innovative solution aids processing statutorily required psychotropic medication consents that impact the health and welfare of children in Illinois.

DCFS and DoIT first assessed the current state psychotropic consent business process and identified multiple pain points and steps that required a high degree of manual effort. These areas were designated as opportunities for standardization and improvement. By defining business rules and stabilizing process areas, the existing consent process was adjusted within the bounds of governing policy to reduce the number of manual steps needed to complete the process.

PRIOR PROCESS



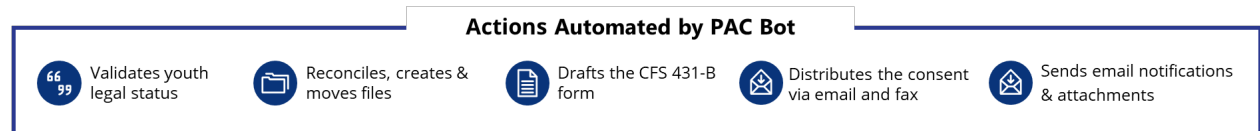
NEW AUTOMATED PROCESS



Once the business process was re-imagined, the teams worked to build a “digital butler” powered by RPA. Using time-based triggers, PAC Bot runs in the background and only requires supervisors to indicate which workers are available for receiving assignments and for workers to verify that produced consents are accurate prior to signing.

The solution was implemented with significant collaborative efforts by cross-discipline teams including representatives from legal, policy, technology, testing, program staff, and security and risk assessment.

- **Technical Implementation:** Implementation, Oversight
- **Guardian Consent Unit:** Advocate, Implementation, Oversight, End-User, Beneficiary
- **Security and Risk Assessment:** Implementation, Oversight
- **Testers:** Oversight

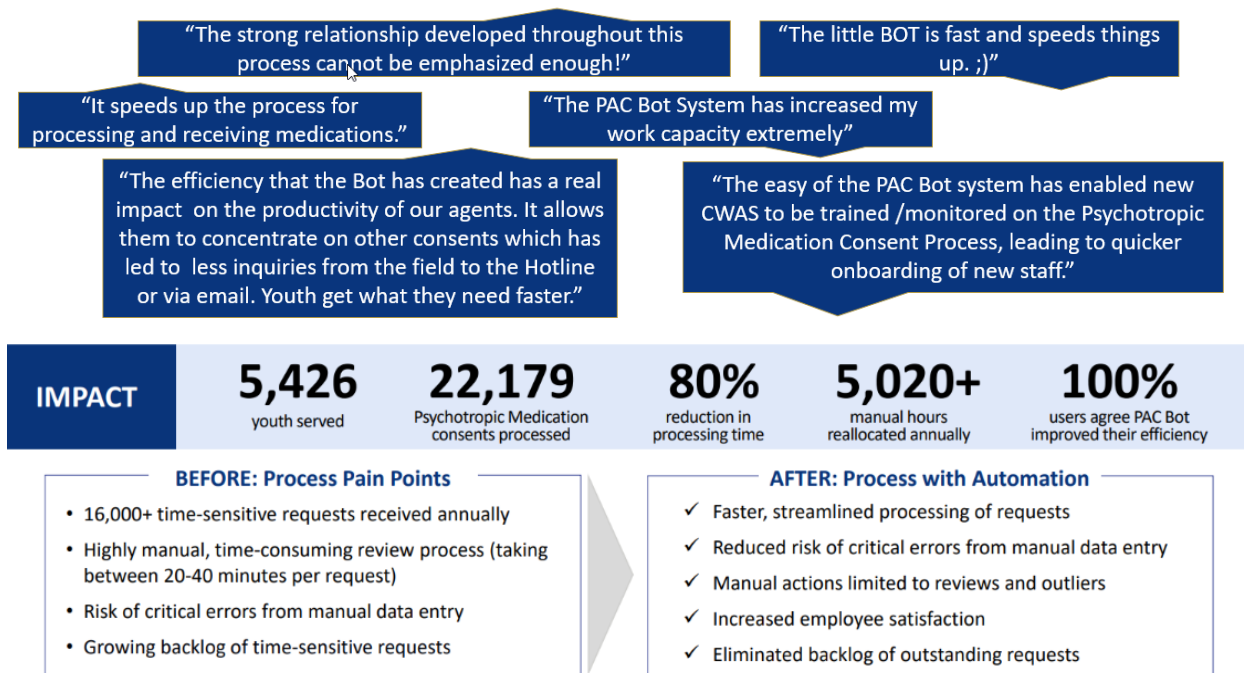


Over the course of nine months and two releases, all infrastructure setup, process assessment, development, testing and training for PAC Bot was completed, bringing best-of-breed technology to DCFS on infrastructure that is easily scalable for additional use cases.

IMPACT

PAC Bot users have provided overwhelmingly positive feedback about the solution. Following implementation, all users completed a user satisfaction survey, with 100% of respondents indicating PAC Bot has made their roles easier and increased their efficiency. A small portion of feedback provided lessons learned for the implementation team, such as highlighting a need for robust change management and communications beyond initial deployment to support newly onboarded staff’s familiarization with PAC Bot.

What users are saying...



The implementation of PAC Bot has caused a profound shift in service delivery, especially regarding the expedited access to medication for children in care. PAC Bot’s effectiveness in processing over 22,000 consents in since the solution was deployed has not only streamlined operations but more importantly, it has reduced the wait time for critical medication by 80%. This means children are now receiving their medication 27 hours faster, a vital improvement that directly influences their health and wellbeing. By reallocating an average of 418 hours per month or over 5,020 hours annually, PAC Bot allows child welfare employees to focus more on the care of these children rather than on administrative tasks. Additionally, the automation has led to a reduction in manual entry, thereby mitigating the risk of critical medication and dosage errors, ensuring safer and more accurate medical care for the children. PAC Bot has also diminished the volume of inquiries about the status of consents via hotline or email, indicating an improved communication process. This powerful impact of PAC Bot summarized in the image above underscores its transformative potential in enhancing not just efficiency but more critically, the quality of care and services provided to Illinois’ youth in care.

While this implementation focused on psychotropic consents, other consent types can benefit from similar RPA solutions and broader digital transformation. Since implementation, the project team has continued its partnership working with the Office of the DCFS Guardian. The team is assessing all consent types for similar business process innovation opportunities, is designing an external portal for consent request intake for all consent types and is exploring opportunities for more bots to support processing upon submission. By migrating to a portal and creating more bots to address consent intake and reconciliation, DCFS employees can significantly reduce time spent on labor-intensive tasks and increase time dedicated to mission-critical work. This shift will result in improved welfare for children and families across Illinois.

The world of automation is constantly changing. By embracing innovation and change in everyday business processes and RPA, Illinois illustrates its commitment to being on the cutting edge of

technology, thereby fostering efficiency, accuracy, and productivity in its operations. This initiative serves as a testament to the importance of embracing business process innovation, as it not only streamlines workflows but also allows for the reallocation of human resources to more strategic, value-adding tasks. By doing so, Illinois positions itself to adapt to the rapidly evolving technological landscape and set a benchmark for others to follow.