Unified Case Management Solution Reforms the PA Criminal Justice System

Overview

Country or Region: USA
Industry: Government

Customer Profile
The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania is a statewide, nonprofit, non-partisan association representing leaders of Pennsylvania's sixty-seven counties.

Business Situation
At the department and county levels, multiple, disparate case management systems required redundant data entry and made it difficult to share information among departments.

Solution
A Unified Case Management application, built on Microsoft Dynamics CRM, provides a common platform and enables information exchange among several departments in the Criminal Justice System.

Benefits
- Improved Public Safety
- More Efficient Processes
- Better Insight

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> Services and Telecommunications,
> County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania

In the Criminal Justice System, the counties of Pennsylvania are represented by several separate, yet equally important departments. The courts, jails, district attorneys, and probation and parole offices all maintained disparate case management systems. This proliferation of applications—exacerbated by a lack of a common data standard—led to redundant data entry and made aggregate reporting and analysis extremely complex. The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, a non-partisan government services organization, is piloting a Unified Case Management (UCM) solution, built on Microsoft Dynamics CRM. When fully deployed, the UCM, combined with a set of NEIM-compliant data standards, will provide a platform that facilitates sharing of information at the department, county, and State levels, and that significantly improves the efficiency of case management throughout the offender lifecycle.

Microsoft Dynamics®

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> Rita Reynolds, Director of Technology Services and Telecommunications, CCAP

Situation

The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) is a nonprofit, non-partisan government services organization that works on behalf of the 67 counties of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, providing services and administering programs that help county commissioners govern effectively. Within the CCAP, a dedicated technology department works with the counties to define IT strategy and execute on technology initiatives that support efficient, transparent government.

The CCAP's purview includes supporting the Criminal Justice System, a complex organization that comprises several departments, including the jails, courts, district attorneys, adult probation and parole offices, and law enforcement agencies operated by each county. For more than 30 years, departments within each county had maintained their own, standalone case management systems. In the past decade, many counties had standardized on a Windows-based, commercial off-the-shelf package, but they were finding it difficult to move to web-based technologies that would have facilitated data exchange among the many systems.

The proliferation of systems meant that offender data—detailed information and case histories of the people processed by the Criminal Justice System—was entered multiple times and stored in multiple systems, even within a single county. In addition, the lack of a common data standard across departments and counties hampered any efforts to share information.

Without generally accepted standards for common data points (for example, eye color or hair color), and with no connections between computer systems, aggregating information for an individual offender was a slow, manual effort, and reporting and statistical analysis across the entire criminal justice system was virtually impossible.

Rita Reynolds, Director of Technology Services and Telecommunications for the CCAP, understood the efficiencies and even the benefit to public safety that could result from a unified case management system. But in the face of organizational resistance to change, she focused first on the underlying issue: data quality.

With a Federal grant and a steering committee representing stakeholders from the State and counties, the CCAP established a set of data definitions based on the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM). These standards were adopted by agencies across the Commonwealth, although most applications lacked data validation controls.

In early 2011, building on their success with the data model, the CCAP revisited the vision of a technology system that could unify case management at the county level, maintaining a single record for each individual or offender across pre-trial, jail, and probation and parole. While it was clear that no commercial off-the-shelf software could manage the entire offender lifecycle, and the challenge of organizational inertia still remained, the release of Microsoft Dynamics CRM 2011 provided the impetus to make the vision a reality.

Solution

The CCAP had been using Microsoft Dynamics CRM internally for project management and contact management, so they were familiar with the technology as well as the extensibility of the xRM application platform. Further, Pennsylvania's incoming CIO, George

White, had long been a proponent of Microsoft Dynamics CRM as a platform for the development of rich flexible, applications from his time in the PA Office of the Attorney General.

With the maturing of the technology and the support of State technology leadership, Microsoft Dynamics CRM 2011 had the potential to overcome both the technical and cultural issues that had impeded efforts to unify case management. The CCAP quickly obtained a Federal grant for development, identified six counties to participate in a pilot program, and began building and testing the Unified Case Management (UCM) application in January 2012.

"It's great to get county and State on the same page," says Reynolds. "We had seen a proof-of-concept demonstration by the State of Illinois and realized that the time was finally right to move forward with our own unified solution. When we raised the issue, in 2011, we had immediate support from 14 of the 67 counties."

Functionality for Each Department
The application will address the needs of three departments within the Criminal Justice System: Jails, District Attorneys, and Adult Probation/Parole. At the core of the application is a custom entity that represents the offender data model that the CCAP had established previously. This "core offender" module includes the data on an individual that is common to every department.

Additional entities address the unique information needs and functional requirements of the three departments. "We've made a lot of progress very fast," says Reynolds. "We have full buy-in and participation from four departments (Jails, District Attorneys, Adult Probation, and

Information Technology), including counties that aren't part of the pilot, which are tracking our progress and testing the solution in anticipation of the broader release."

Reporting and Dashboards
Built-in data validation controls ensure that information is consistent across all departments and counties, which enables reporting and analysis at the department, county, and even the State level. Regular data quality reports allow county staff to check for data that may have been missing when an offender entered the system, to ensure that the information is captured and recorded after the fact.

Day-to-day, role-based dashboards allow managers to monitor case loads, for example to see how many active cases a particular Parole Officer is working. The UCM also streamlines monthly and year-end reporting requirements imposed by the State or by grant programs. The CCAP had supported year-end reporting under the old systems, and found it extremely difficult. Likewise, the State had a hard time getting consistent data from the counties, which had their own data structures and reporting tools.

Long-term, the availability of accurate, complete data will make it possible to perform statistical analysis that identifies patterns for increased use of alternative treatment programs.

Streamlined Flow of Information
At the county level, electronic exchange of offender records between participating counties will simplify county-to-county and interstate transfers. Alerts and notifications are built into the system, for example, to alert the responsible parole officer when a parolee is arrested. Mobile and remote functionality will further ensure that county

staff, such as probation officers, has access to up-to-the-minute data even when they're not in the office.

In the Adult Probation module, a web-based tool allows low-risk offenders to update their contact information and perform required check-ins online. The responsible Probation Officer is alerted if anything changes—or if an offender fails to report on schedule. The remote capabilities make it easy for low-risk offenders to comply with requirements, eliminating one of the most common causes of parole violation—lack of transportation. The system also alleviates foot traffic to the adult probation office, reducing the reception or clerical burden on county staff.

The system has also streamlined the automated receipt of data from the State, which has long been a struggle. "The statewide court system captures offender data, but there's never been an easy way for counties to consume that data automatically," explains Reynolds. "Today, we can set up a component in Microsoft Dynamics CRM for counties to consume that data into the UCM. Now, offender information auto-populates their systems."

The UCM data model also enables automated data exchange among departments and agencies, and between the county UCM and statewide systems, such as the Pennsylvania Court System, Department of Corrections, and JNET. The CCAP developers ensured that the new system includes XML protocols that will enable electronic filing, to ensure timely, accurate reporting.

Flexible Deployment Model
The deployment model of Microsoft Dynamics CRM and the UCM gives the CCAP the flexibility to address the different needs of different counties. During the

pilot, the application is hosted by the CCAP, which has become a Microsoft Dynamics Certified Partner. When the solution is rolled out statewide, counties will have the option to continue using this hosted implementation or to deploy Microsoft Dynamics CRM as part of their own IT infrastructure. Reynolds anticipates that smaller counties will appreciate the low maintenance associated with the hosted model, while larger counties will likely deploy their own implementations as they adopt Microsoft Dynamics CRM as a platform for additional solutions.

Reynolds also notes that Microsoft Dynamics CRM alleviates issues of 'vendor lock-in' and avoids the high maintenance and support costs associated with commercial off-the-shelf software. "We don't have to rely on a vendor to make relatively simple changes, such as adding fields or creating forms," says Reynolds. "The larger counties can handle configuration and maintain the system using their internal IT staff, and as a certified partner, the CCAP can fulfill the role of a third-party vendor in performing larger development and customization work."

Looking ahead, Reynolds anticipates that more and more departments will recognize the potential of Microsoft Dynamics CRM to enhance their own workloads. "Now that people know the data is good, and it's captured in UCM, they're going to find other uses for it," she says. "The counties are already talking about growing the system to include public defender and pre-trial departments as well as human service analytics, by using Microsoft Dynamics CRM to consume existing data and generate reports."

For More Information

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For more information about County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania products and services, call (800) 895-9039 or visit the website at:
www.pacounties.org

Benefits

The UCM has the potential to introduce significant efficiencies into the Criminal Justice System, while improving public safety and ensuring timely due process for everyone involved.

Improved Public Safety

Access to complete, accurate information ensures that everyone who comes into contact with an offender can make informed decisions and take appropriate actions. "The more information the case workers, probation officers, or jail guards have in front of them in a timely fashion, the better," says Reynolds. "With UCM, they don't have to call probation or find a piece of paper to see if there's a warrant out on someone; they have the current contact information to locate an offender faster; it helps ensure the safety of our officers and our citizens."

More Efficient Processes

Reducing redundant data entry, eliminating manual rekeying of data between systems, and automating reporting and statistical analysis are all ways the UCM will save counties time and money over the long term. "We know we will see huge efficiencies when we roll out the UCM," says Reynolds. "Counties are strapped for resources. They're being asked to cut back. This system will allow them to absorb those impacts without negative impacts on safety or how efficiently offenders are processed."

Better Insight

The reporting and dashboarding capabilities of Microsoft Dynamics CRM and the additional analytical opportunities resulting from the common data model enable more effective, proactive management of the Criminal Justice System at the State, county, and department levels. The UCM delivers accurate information to the people who need it, whether they are managing daily workloads of individual case workers, compiling annual reports for State agencies, or mining data for trends and patterns that will shape the future of the Criminal Justice System.

Microsoft Dynamics CRM

Microsoft Dynamics CRM is a complete solution that gives you a 360-degree view of your constituents' needs—from first contact through service fulfillment. Fast, flexible, and affordable, Microsoft Dynamics CRM streamlines important tasks, such as constituent services, grant writing, field inspections, investigation management, case management, call-center management, campus information sharing, emergency response, and much more.

Organizations realize higher levels of efficiency with improved workflow tools that enable cross-departmental collaboration and productivity. In addition to the core functionality available out-of-the-box, Microsoft Dynamics CRM is a robust platform to develop applications to meet the processes and needs of your organization and the departments within it.

For more information about Microsoft Dynamics, go to:
http://crm.dynamics.com/en-us/government

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