

BUSINESS PROCESS REDESIGN IN ALASKA

“With the transition to process management, we’ve turned our cycle time around. Applications that used to take 22 or 23 days to process, now take an average of 5.”

Ronald Kreher, Director, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

Client

State of Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), Division of Public Assistance (DPA)

Timeframe

January 2016 to Present

Project Overview

When DHSS-DPA engaged Change & Innovation Agency (C!A®) to assist in redesigning the agency’s business practices, the agency was facing a number of significant challenges. Alaska was experiencing an economic downturn due to the drop in oil prices, constricting budgets for state agencies including DHSS. Budget shortfalls also impacted DHSS-DPA’s ability to approve staff overtime to help address its large backlog. Additionally, a large percentage of the state’s SNAP households also apply for and/or receive Medicaid, and staff are processing eligibility for the same household in two different systems – one for SNAP, and one for Medicaid. The agency also lacks an enterprise imaging solution and a call center (though a call center is planned for development).

C!A’s partnership with DHSS-DPA has focused on process redesign, implementation, sustainment, and monitoring. Our efforts have emphasized:

- + One and Done approach (First Contact Resolution; no appointments needed; on-demand interviews and processing)
- + Eliminating unnecessary customer interactions
- + Achieving consistency
- + Identifying hidden capacity
- + Reducing processing time

Tasks

Beginning in January 2016, C!A worked closely with DHSS-DPA to assess the agency’s most important eligibility practices to inform new strategies for processing the work. After redesigning the process solutions, C!A led implementation of the new processes statewide. Our redesign efforts also included custom configured implementation of our workload management solution to assist with ongoing monitoring and management of workload and office performance to ensure continued adherence to the new processes.

The major tasks performed during the lifecycle of the project to date include:

- + Assessment of local office operations and staff
- + Strategy sessions with leadership to develop a plan of action and approach
- + Redesign teams to create work processes that are faster, more accurate, flexible, and focused on using precious eligibility worker time only on value-added tasks. As-is process mapping was conducted, barriers and bottlenecks were identified, and new processes were developed.
- + Full implementation planning and support for statewide rollout of the new processes and workload management solution

- + Facilitating one-on-one meetings with regional (local office) managers to discuss operational data and areas of opportunities, with a focus on helping managers improve worker capacity, reduce scheduling and unnecessary pending, and improve overall timeliness
- + Holding weekly calls to discuss capacity challenges and identify opportunities within the BPR framework that eliminate barriers and increase worker productivity
- + Providing technical assistance as the DHSS-DPA designs and implements a call center
- + Making recommendations on how to reduce backlog to immediately impact SNAP application timeliness
- + Identifying offices and individual workers struggling with productivity and BPR procedures
- + Monitoring and oversight of data to assist in identifying areas of concern and improvement

Outcomes

CIA's work provided DHSS-DPA with a method for measuring their workload and the agency has since set standard measures and goals statewide. They have also standardized many practices, and all regions and offices are completing their work in a consistent manner. The agency:

- + Improved their SNAP timeliness to above 90% (as of May 2018)
- + Started a call center to provide clients with additional options for completing their eligibility interviews,
- + Reduced backlog from 90,000 cases to 40,000 cases
- + Significantly increased capacity with approximately the same number of staff
- + Is currently working toward a shared statewide workload (estimated completion October 2018)