

CUSTOMER NAME

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

INDUSTRY

Health and Human Services

LOCATION

Texas

SOLUTION HIGHLIGHTS

- Training, supplemental staffing, document preparation, capture, and imaging
- Connectivity to DFPS IMPACT system through API
- 39 million pages already accessible online
- Set up in DFPS regional offices to scan and digitize files at collection point going forward

BENEFITS

- Replaced 7 to 10 day information request process with immediate access to records
- Provided caseworkers with instant access to historic information about families they serve
- Enabled faster, more effective decision-making about each case

IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO RECORDS HELPS CASEWORKERS PROTECT CHILDREN

BUSINESS PROFILE

The mission of The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) is to protect children, the elderly, and people with disabilities from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The agency offers services through its Adult Protective Services, Child Protective Services, Child Care Licensing, and Prevention and Early Intervention divisions.

OPERATIONAL OVERVIEW

The agency's Child Protective Services (CPS) Division investigates reports of child abuse and neglect. It also provides services to children and families in their homes, places children in foster care, helps foster children make the transition to adulthood, and places children in adoptive homes. Among its greatest responsibilities is the protection of children who have been victims of abuse or neglect, or who have been the subject of past investigations.

BUSINESS NEED

To monitor and protect vulnerable children, CPS must maintain large volumes of historic information, not only about each child involved in a case, but also about his or her parents and caregivers. Depending on the situation, this might include court records, adoption paperwork, investigative reports, or other documents.

Over time, the agency amassed tens of thousands of boxes containing these records, which had to be stored at an off-site facility. In 2008, DFPS was receiving approximately 200 requests from around the state each business day – or close to 52,000 requests a year – for information contained in these files. Most of the requests came from caseworkers seeking information for an active investigation.

When a file was requested, the CPS records management division would, in turn, request to have the appropriate file pulled from the off-site storage company. Each time a request was made, the agency had to pay a pull and restocking fee, as well as pay for transportation to and from the warehouse, and then finally to the requesting party. All together, this process took an average of seven to ten days. In addition to being costly and inefficient, this method did not support the agency's mission; caseworkers tasked with protecting children in jeopardy often times did not have time to wait for the delivery of a paper file.

"When you're [an investigator] knocking on a door for the first time, you don't know information about the past," said TJ Wasden, the agency's Records Management Office.

"You might have an alleged perpetrator in front of you, telling you a particular story. You have no information about whether their version is accurate or credible," said Wasden. "So, we needed to speed up the process by which investigators can get information about the family with whom they're working."

The agency's primary objective was to get historic details into the hands of its caseworkers immediately, to help them do the job they were hired to do.

SOLUTION

In 2007, under the direction of Wasden's manager, Sally Tompkins, and Chief Operating Officer Terri Ware, the division requested and received funding from the legislature to improve its record storage and retrieval process.

During the first phase of the project, which began in the summer of 2008, DFPS worked with Neubus to begin imaging its adoption and conservatorship records, which are large files with a lengthy history on a particular family.

Due to the confidentiality of the records and requirement to assist DFPS with the full preparation of the files, Neubus setup, managed, and maintained a dedicated facility to handle the complete conversion of the records. Neubus also hired, and with the assistance of DFPS, screened, trained, and certified over 100 employees to perform the first phase of the conversion. As a result, approximately 34 million images were made available online to DFPS, enabling records management staff members to instantly search for files through Neubus' ESD system.

One of the most significant outcomes of imaging the records was a reduction in the cycle time for filling records requests from 7 - 10 days to instant access. There were also considerable cost savings as result of the efficiencies gained through imaging.

With the initial phase of the project, DFPS decided to give only designated records management staff access to the electronic records, maintaining control of all requests coming in from the field. For the second phase, DFPS focused on enabling caseworkers in the field to have immediate access to the records.

To make this happen, Neubus built a bridge thru an Application Program Interface, or API, to the DFPS case management system, called IMPACT. The IMPACT system includes built-in access controls, that with the API in place, can "call" Neubus' ESD system to retrieve images associated with case information, enabling CPS

caseworkers and other employees logged into IMPACT to directly access the images related to a particular record.

Caseworkers searching for background on a particular child or caregiver are now able to pull up their history immediately through IMPACT via the API, putting critical information at their fingertips in just seconds.

Also, as part of the second phase, Neubus is imaging on-site for DFPS in their regional Records Information Offices (RIO's) located in Houston, Austin, and Dallas, and has plans to launch on-site imaging in San Antonio and El Paso in the fall of 2010. Caseworkers now send their completed reports from the field to the RIO for preparation, while Neubus scans the records making the images and data available almost instantly and keeping files as current as possible.

This comprehensive solution enables DFPS to get historic and current information into the hands of its caseworkers immediately, helping them serve the children they were hired to protect.

BENEFITS

IMMEDIATE ACCESS

Neubus' services have helped CPS drastically reduce the time and effort required to handle each file request.

"Before, cases were difficult and time-consuming to locate. We started imaging so that we wouldn't have to wait 7 to 10 days to get a record back from storage when someone needs it," said Wasden.

Now all field investigators, CPS caseworkers, legal counsel, and any other DFPS employee with rights to use IMPACT have immediate access to the files they need directly through IMPACT, and they no longer need to make a request through the DFPS records management staff for access to the file.

"Now that the API is up and running, access to the files is easier and more seamless than ever," said Wasden. "This is truly wonderful!"

MORE EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING

With immediate access to records, caseworkers have been empowered to have a more complete understanding of the history of those they serve, helping them decide on the best course of action.

"When you're dealing with abuse of children, emotions can run high," said Wasden. "Knowing more about the history helps investigators make a better assessment, and adds to the likelihood of a better outcome."

LOWER COSTS

While the agency's primary goal was to get historic information into the hands of its team members, the solution has also enabled CPS to eliminate substantial administrative and mailing costs associated with requesting physical documents from a storage company.

SUMMARY

Electronic imaging and document management services from Neubus have enabled the DFPS Child Protective Services Division to provide faster access to information about the children they protect, improving the level of care they can provide, and reducing costs in the process.

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