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COVER PAGE

Innovation Study Title Caseworker Resource Center

Category Technology and Tools

Jurisdiction Name Johnson County, Kansas Government

City/County Manager Hannes Zacharias

Population 544,179

Submit Innovation Study for an Alliance Innovation Award Yes [] No [X]

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County Manager's Office

Hannes Zacharias, County Manager

Public Service ... Public Value ... Public Leadership

Johnson County, Kansas

August 12, 2011

Dear Ms. Allen:

Please accept this letter as Johnson County, KS Government's request to present at The Imagining Innovations of the Future conference in April 2012. The proposal is for the County's web-based resource center, "The Caseworker Resource Center" (CRC). The CRC is a secure web resource developed with the central goal of collaborating for client success. The primary focus of the CRC is to provide Human Services professionals with information to increase their understanding of a client and his/her needs and to foster collaboration among these professionals when serving the same individual or family. Human Services professionals benefit from the following core features:

- Client Information – Basic demographic data about individual clients and the services that they are receiving from a department/agency. A client receiving services from multiple departments/agencies is flagged as a Mutual Client.
- Household Information – Information about other clients potentially living at the same address.
- Collaboration Contacts – Phone numbers and email addresses of other professionals providing services to a client.
- Information about Human Service Agencies – Referral and location information for community based social services in Johnson and Wyandotte Counties in Kansas and Jackson and Clay Counties in Missouri.
- Mapping – Map/Route clients to community services. Map/Route Human Services professionals to client residences.

Johnson County initiated the project in 2007 by enlisting the help of the County's AIMS/GIS department to develop the mapping function of the system. Overtime, the system was enhanced to become user-friendly, and the next step incorporated all County human service departments.

A project team comprising front-line human services staff was convened in 2008 to represent each department's unique needs. This group meets monthly to work on developing the system in order to meet the needs of users while keeping a "global" view for how the CRC could benefit the citizens that they serve. The project team continues to work on training and adoption efforts, enhancements, and opportunities for expansion. To date, six internal departments use the system for "client" data, but there are a number of external agencies throughout the Kansas City metro with access to the "services" and "mapping" capabilities.

Anticipated and Actual Outcomes

The County's anticipated outcome was to continue to provide a high level of public service to citizens even in these tough economic times. Outcomes are difficult to quantify, however, the project team requests and tracks staff feedback of individual client outcomes. Examples include:

"I had a new client in need of homeless housing options. The CRC was very helpful to be able to find the phone numbers for the homeless shelters quickly."

"I did an assessment with a client who lost her husband, and she was looking for grief resources. I printed out a map of several grief groups in her area with directions. She called me and let me know she attended a group and liked it."

"I recently saw an 84 year old lady who recently became a paraplegic and her spouse was the main caregiver. I gave him "Caregiver" information from the CRC. Also, they wanted to know if I knew anyone that "puts" in elevators in residential homes. Well, I thought surely, it won't be on CRC. And to my surprise, I found two resources that actually do that. So, you never know. I am thankful I was able to help them."

Costs and/or Savings

Johnson County is proud to have developed this system without spending tax dollars beyond existing resources. The County has built, maintained, and continues to add enhancements using existing staff resources. The AIMS/GIS department develops and maintains the infrastructure of the system. The teams of System Specialists are full-time employees with specified job duties within their respective departments, and they provide input and guidance. The position of Human Services Resource Coordinator was created to audit the system, provide initial training for new/existing staff, and to promote the system to external agencies.

Innovative Characteristics

The CRC is groundbreaking, because it emphasizes the sharing of client data across agency boundaries. The system takes existing client data from ten separate databases and aggregates it into the CRC and then matches up mutual clients and mutual households. This is innovative, as it allows human service professionals the ability to work with a citizen in a more "holistic" approach. It identifies other departments and services that the individual may be receiving within the County and also identifies other members of that same household and what services they may be receiving. This allows for a true collaborative effort among departments to provide much needed resources without duplication.

Obstacles and Results

This process of sharing data across agency boundaries has also created some obstacles for the project team. First, staff worked with attorneys to ensure compliance with all HIPAA rules and regulations. The County consulted the Law Firm of Tomes and Dvorak to guide the implementation of appropriate safeguards. Business Associate contracts were developed and signed among departments to address confidentiality concerns. Second, the project team worked with each department to alleviate concerns and help emphasize the benefit to the citizens that we serve. Also, the project team has been addressing the challenges related to culture change by helping staff to perceive their positions as Johnson County employees in addition to their roles as agents of the individual departments. The overall adoption and integration of this system has

taken multiple collaborative meetings among departments, but this obstacle has been overcome by the constant support from the County Manager and department directors.

The technical obstacles were confronted by the AIMS/GIS Department by working with internal departments to arrange for an appropriate way to extract data without compromising security. They have also worked with external departments to grant access and generate usernames and passwords while ensuring the highest degree of integrity and security.

The final result is an accurate, up-to-date system of client information that provides a clear picture of the individual and family needs. The ability to map the locations of clients and service providers, including public transit options, allows caseworkers to provide immediate information to clients.

New Issues/Consequences

The next issue for this project will be to expand the system to external partners such as neighboring counties, non-profits, or the State of Kansas. State statutes and Federal regulations continue to create barriers to collaborating for client success, but the County anticipates that the expansion efforts will be successful.

1. Innovation/Creativity

- a. How did the idea/program/project/service improve the organization?

Caseworkers are able to access this online tool to determine if their client is a mutual client of other County departments. Staff can provide immediate service referrals to clients, they can assist with finding the basic needs, help to find jobs for clients, and they are able to coordinate consults with clients to help decrease the number of trips a client may need to take to see all caseworkers. The safety component is also valuable to the organization, because employees are able to view other clients at the addresses they visit.

- b. Were new technologies used?

No new technology was used. Existing information technology and GIS mapping functions were the primary tools which permitted the County to develop this system internally at a low cost to tax payers.

- c. Was a consultant used?

No consultants were used in the development of this system.

2. Outcomes Achieved

- a. What customer/community needs and expectations were identified and fulfilled?

The primary focus of the team was to provide resources to address “employment/education”, “housing” and “transportation” needs.

- b. Has service delivery been enhanced?

Initial feedback from staff is that accessibility and accuracy of resources were dramatically improved. Staff is no longer relying on outdated resource manuals for service data.

- c. Did the initiative improve access to your government?

The initiative has yielded positive results for citizens to gain access to local, state and federally funded programs (i.e., HUD programming, aging services, employment opportunities).

- d. Has the health of the community improved as a result?

Yes, the County believes that the CRC contributes to the social, economic, and environmental health of Johnson County. The County's Public Health Department has reported success in the ability to provide needed services by promoting such initiatives as "Safe Havens" for newborns that may otherwise be abandoned, and Outreach Nursing works with clients of Court Services to follow up with tuberculosis patients. The CRC benefits some of the most vulnerable citizens by providing information about food and utility assistance or rehabilitation services. The mapping component assists caseworkers with planning the most efficient routes for home visits which saves taxpayer dollars on gas and reduces the County's carbon footprint relating to mileage.

3. Applicable Results and Real World Practicality

The goal in presenting would be to explain how Johnson County was able to design this system without spending County dollars. Also, this cross-collaboration and data sharing effort makes government more efficient and effective with service delivery, and Johnson County is proud to share this with other organizations.

4. Innovation Study Presentation

The presentation would be a mixture of Power Point slides and a live demonstration delivered by the County Manager and Human Services Resource Coordinator walking the audience through the staff process and show how this tool assists caseworkers with their daily jobs while improving outcomes for our most vulnerable populations. This presentation will show how technology has assisted with efficiency, and that the major challenges for progress have been adaptive rather than technical issues. A handout that would provide some basic information about the system would also be available.