

ABA/ NLADA 2004 Equal Justice Conference

Getting the Most Out of Your Case Management System

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Brief Description:

Geared toward managers who want to purchase a new case management system (CMS) or learn how to make the most out of their current CMS, session topics include: creating a meaningful process for selecting a system; figuring out what your program needs its CMS to do; evaluating internal resources available to implement and support a CMS; staff training; and a review of CMS features and characteristics. This session is based on the CMS report recently released by Legal Aid of East Tennessee. Though they will not focus on comparing existing systems, session leaders will take specific questions.

Topical Outline:

- I. *Selecting and Implementing a Computerized Case Management System: A Guide for Managers* (10 minutes)
 - a. Intro by Dave Yoder
 - b. Commissioned by LAET
 - c. Funded by LSC TIG grant
 - d. Written by Julia and Colleen
 - e. Eight systems included
 - f. More than 150 staff members interviewed from 15 different programs
 - g. Vendors/developers completed surveys and conducted demos

- II. Steps in buying and implementing a new CMS:
 - a. Determine: Case reporting or case management? (2 minutes)
 - i. A case reporting system centers on the need to collect, report on, and analyze data about cases, clients, and casehandling.
 - ii. A case management system, on the other hand, includes the intake/report information loop, but at its heart is a collection of tools designed to assist with casehandling itself, particularly litigated cases.
 - b. Have an inclusive process (3 minutes)
 - i. Don't just leave it to your tech staff
 - ii. Include users at all levels
 - c. Exercise: Small group discussions (15 minutes)
 - i. Organize into five groups according to some affinity or randomly, depending on who's in room

- ii. Assign each group 2 of the questions in section (d) below to discuss and report back to the large group.
- iii. Discuss:
 - 1. How do you find the answer to this question?
 - 2. Whom do you need to involve to ensure your answer is complete?
 - 3. What do you think the answer is?
- iv. Small groups report back (10 minutes)
- d. Determine what you ideally want do with your CMS. Think about what your program does now and also project where it will be in 5 years.
 - i. What functions do staff members need to perform for the program to operate effectively?
 - ii. What do people wish they could do that they cannot now do?
 - iii. What type of work does your program do – mostly brief advice, a lot of litigation, and/or extensive community legal education?
 - iv. What existing software packages do staff use extensively now, and what do they like about them?
 - v. What kind of support and supervision do you have (or wish you had) for new staff and volunteers?
 - vi. What kind of information do you need for high-quality supervision and management?
 - vii. What kind of information about your work and your clients do your funders require?
 - viii. What kind of information do you need for resource allocation, self-assessment and evaluation?
 - ix. Does your program have multiple offices and/or intake sites?
 - x. Do you want to coordinate your CMS with other programs and, if so, what security measures will be required to maintain client confidentiality?
- e. What Internal Resources are Available to Support the CMS? (10 minutes)
 - i. How Much Does A CMS Cost?
 - 1. Include data conversion, on-going costs, set-up, training, tech infrastructure
 - ii. How Much IT Support Do You Need?
 - 1. More complex systems require more support
 - iii. Commitment from Managers and Staff
 - 1. To use the more complex tools you will need time and expertise from your non-tech staff to develop, for example, work plans, intake flow, referral information, document templates
 - 2. Will your staff actually use it?
- f. Once you have it – Train (10 minutes)
 - i. No one ever gets enough
 - ii. Must be on-going

- III. Small group exercise: (same or different as before?) (15 minutes)
 - a. Each group will be assigned one of several features requiring customization or work of some kind:
 - i. Reports
 - ii. Document assembly
 - iii. Intake questionnaires
 - iv. Training
 - v. Advocate tools
 - b. Discuss:
 - i. How they will ensure that their program is able to maximize their use of the feature?
 - ii. Who will they need to involve?
 - iii. Report back (10 minutes)

- IV. Conclusion and last thoughts (5 minutes)