



# The HHS Innovator's Playbook

Nurturing Bold Ideas in Health and Human Services  
Programs

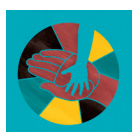
# About the Deloitte Center for Government Insights

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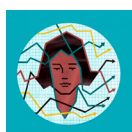
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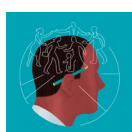
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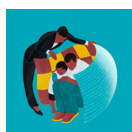
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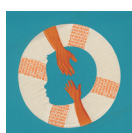
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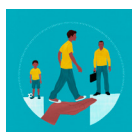
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Improving outcomes for families

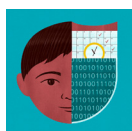
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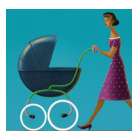
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# Child support's integration imperative

Improving outcomes for families



With caseloads on the decline, child support programs are reevaluating how they deliver services, and what services to deliver.

**I**F YOU LOOK at the macroeconomic data, the US economy seems to be in great shape.

Unemployment stands at a 50-year low, with more Americans employed than ever before.<sup>1</sup>

But ask job seekers about the economy, and many will paint a different picture: Prolonged job searches. Low pay. Juggling multiple jobs to pay the bills. Unpredictable hours that make it hard to arrange for child care.

In short, the economic data tells one story, while the lived experience of many Americans tells another. What explains this discrepancy?

“The problem is that the quality of the stock of jobs on offer has been deteriorating for the last 30 years,” explains Dan Alpert, a Cornell Law School professor who helped create the US Private Sector Job Quality Index (JQI), a monthly indicator that measures the quality of the jobs on offer by calculating the ratio of higher-wage/higher-hour jobs to lower-wage/lower-hour jobs.<sup>2</sup> As of January 2020, the JQI was 82.68, which means there are roughly 82 “high-quality” jobs for every 100 “low-quality” ones. That’s a marked decline from the prerecession ratio of 90.<sup>3</sup>

If you examine the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, you’ll see a

similar split between the data and actual experience. TANF has fewer caseloads today than in any year since the program was created. Between 2006 and 2017, most states saw their TANF caseloads decline by more than 20 percent.<sup>4</sup>

“Across the country, we’ve seen TANF caseloads drop to their lowest levels ever,” observes David Stillman, assistant secretary of the Economic Services Administration (ESA) in Washington State’s Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and former Division of Child Support director for the state. “Some of that, of course, has to do with a good economy.”<sup>5</sup>

But that isn’t the whole story. Many individuals who no longer qualify for TANF still cannot afford basic necessities. According to Stillman, “People have to be truly impoverished to be eligible for TANF, but that doesn’t mean that someone who’s receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits isn’t struggling.”<sup>6</sup>

As TANF caseloads have declined, so too have child support caseloads. That’s because the child support program has traditionally received most of its referrals from TANF and Medicaid. Since participation in the child support program is higher among low-income families, the decline in numbers of automatic referrals from the TANF caseload has an acute impact on families struggling to make ends meet.<sup>7</sup>

The assumption that all noncustodial parents (NCPs) will find jobs that pay well enough to support both themselves and their children makes far less sense today than when the child support program was created in 1975, particularly in light of the long-term decline in the quality of jobs being created.<sup>8</sup> When parents have insufficient income, no number of reminders or threats of legal action, including jail, can make them come up with regular payments or dig their way out of arrears.

All of these factors have led an increasing number of child support programs to reevaluate how they deliver services, and what services to deliver, with a focus on:

- Elevating the human experience
- Experimenting with more holistic approaches
- Using “big hairy audacious goals” to help bring stakeholders to the table<sup>9</sup>

Here we examine a number of promising approaches states are pursuing.

## Elevating the human experience

What is it like to interact with multiple public assistance programs? A client visits one program, answers a series of lengthy and often intrusive questions, proceeds to another program and answers similar questions, then goes on to a third and repeats the process. Not only can this wear clients out, but it can also serve to retraumatize them each time they have to reveal the circumstances that led them to seek assistance.

Sometimes this siloed program delivery causes direct conflict. Child support might schedule a court hearing for a client at the same time TANF schedules a work program course. Or child welfare might work toward reunification with the family while child support tries to establish a court order.

“To the extent that we build systems and service delivery pathways in ways that are segregated, we’re really missing the opportunity to help the whole family and to put the child first,” observes Stillman.<sup>10</sup>

During the Great Recession, many states moved to transaction-based systems for processing caseloads.

This helped them meet huge spikes in demand for public assistance even as state budget cuts forced them to cut staff. While highly efficient and effective, transaction-based systems have inadvertently undermined the human relationship, distancing caseworkers from clients.

Some child support programs today are working to make interactions with agencies less exhausting and frustrating for clients, and to help agencies connect with clients on a more human level.

Take Washington State's Transforming Case Management initiative. "Part of transforming case management is rooted in the idea that we want to listen to our clients and our staff about how we should go about doing our work," explains Stillman. DSHS is implementing "deskside orientations" to perform intake in a warmer and more client-centered way. It is also beginning to stop handing clients paper referrals to community partners. Instead it seeks to make "warm handoffs," connecting clients to services they need, exactly when they need them. To achieve this, the DSHS Community Services Division is implementing an approach that tailors the information-gathering approach to the needs of individual clients. It's also working with community partners to make sure they are ready, willing, and able to receive the warm handoffs.<sup>11</sup>

In North Carolina, Mecklenburg County uses strategically located community resource centers to provide integrated health and human services to residents. The centers bring SNAP, Medicaid, TANF, emergency assistance, child support, veterans services, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) services, immunizations, care coordination for children, and pregnancy care management under one roof. A client who arrives at one of these facilities gets a personal greeting and checks in electronically, with no need to wait in line. The centers also offer child care services. Cross-service coordination, expedited processes for simple

transactions, and access to partner agencies all help get clients in and out quickly, while seeing everyone they need to see in one warm and inviting stop. From the strategic location to the welcoming design of the centers, the goal, explains Rodney Adams, director of the Department of Community Resources in Mecklenburg County, "is to become part of the community."<sup>12</sup>

## Experimenting with more holistic approaches

To help achieve the deeper goals of keeping children out of poverty and strengthening families, many child support programs are setting their sights beyond collection, adding job and life skills training programs.

For instance, Colorado's Department of Human Services' Division of Child Support Services (CSS) has partnered with counties across the state to transform its child support program from traditional enforcement to a family-centered, multigenerational approach called "2Gen." The goal is to grow family incomes by giving custodial parents and NCPs the employment services and tools they need to improve the long-term well-being of their children.

This is important, explains CSS Director Larry Desbien, because 30,000 families with child support orders receive no financial support each month. That's despite an unemployment rate of 2.5 percent, well below the national average. The 2Gen family resource assessment found that 86 percent of NCPs in those families had criminal records, 68 percent faced transportation barriers, and 36 percent had other barriers to work, all reducing the NCP's ability to pay child support.<sup>13</sup>

While it's still early days, the initial results from one of the 11 counties that has fully implemented the 2Gen model show better child support payment

rates and employment rates. NCPs who participated in 2Gen paid a higher average percentage of their child support obligations and did so more frequently than those in the control group. They were also more likely to be employed at the end of the study.<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, child support agencies in Michigan, New York, Ohio, and Washington are participating in the Families Forward Demonstration project, which offers targeted skill-building activities to help low-income NCPs and custodial parents qualify for better-paying, high-demand jobs in their local labor market. The ultimate goal of the project is to identify successful employment approaches that can be integrated into child support programs across the country to improve the financial welfare of NCPs, increasing their ability to support their children.<sup>15</sup>

## Using big hairy audacious goals to help bring stakeholders to the table

Big hairy audacious goals (BHAGs for short) are a powerful mechanism for stimulating progress toward an ambitious target—think NASA's original moon mission.

In the human services world, Washington State's ESA has set its own BHAG: to reduce the number of residents living in poverty by 50 percent by 2025 in a way that eliminates disparity.<sup>16</sup>

ESA committed to this goal because leaders knew that incremental improvements weren't enough, Stillman says. "If you're going to achieve a goal as big as that, it can't just be TANF or SNAP or child support that will make that happen."<sup>17</sup> All possible stakeholders must come to the table: community and technical colleges, child welfare, K-12 education, the department of health, the department of corrections, the attorney general's office, state legislators, and others. Most

importantly, participants must make space at the table for people who actually live in poverty, not just as token voices but as authorities on the experience to help drive the conversation and decision-making.

"It was more about forcing us to create a forum that would demand of us more than just a token effort at collective impact," Stillman says. "And that has been an extraordinary success." Five years out from 2025, the state is on track to reach its interim goal of reducing poverty by 20 percent in 2020. While Stillman attributes much of that improvement to the state's economic health, the initiative's diverse set of stakeholders has already devised a comprehensive set of recommendations about how to holistically achieve ESA's BHAG.<sup>18</sup>

## The path forward

As more states consider how to integrate child support with other public assistance programs, they should factor in a number of variables. Two variables are particularly important: the intersection of child support with other programs, and the complexity of the data-sharing environment.

The child support program intersects with many other human services programs, potentially creating both positive and negative impacts. For example, research shows that receipt of child support reduces the risk of child abuse and neglect. Mothers who receive child support are less likely to have a "screen-in maltreatment report" than mothers who don't.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, newly established child support orders are associated with children spending a longer time in foster care.<sup>20</sup> States need to unpack and understand such nuances as they develop their integration approaches.

Data sharing can be complicated for child support agencies when different programs are governed by

different legislation. As Stillman explains, “While there are ways to share data, whether it’s by consent or other means, including leveraging and maximizing the ways systems talk to one another, the truth of the matter is that the authorizing legislation for each and every one of our programs is completely different.”<sup>21</sup> Whether it’s the Social Security Act, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, or other legislation, each law uses different language about how to safeguard data and keep it confidential, making the rules extremely difficult to harmonize. Until federal legislation

specifies what data must be shared and how it must be protected, states will have to devote administrative resources trying to chart a path forward to enable data sharing among different programs.

Throughout its history, the child support program has adapted successfully to changing circumstances. To sustain this success, the program must continue to evolve. The welfare of millions of children depends on the ability of child support agencies to deliver the best possible service.



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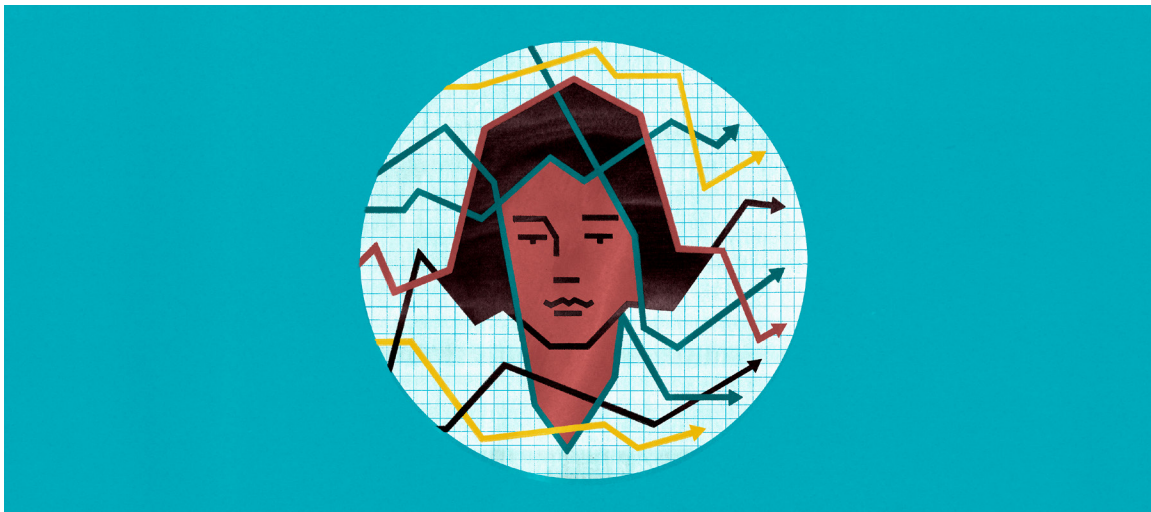
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# Transformational health and human services

Moving to a new paradigm



FOR MOST PROGRAMS, the business day consists of programmed actions and reactions, inputs and outputs, moving back and forth among government workers, their data systems, and their clients. Success is defined primarily by the timeliness and accuracy of these transactions rather than their results. This has led to a model in which outcomes are in fact merely outputs: Did we issue food stamps in a timely fashion? Did we approve 98 percent of our Medicaid applications within 30 days? Did we respond to 95 percent of our hotline calls within 24 hours?

What's often missing, particularly in eligibility programs, is any consideration of the extent to which these *quantitative* transactions have anything to do with *qualitative* changes in people's lives. If an agency responds to 98 percent of its

child abuse hotline calls within 24 hours, what about the 2 percent the agency didn't get to—were those children safe? And what percentage of calls to which the agency responded were eventually “screened out” because they were based on unfounded allegations?

Or, more simply: To what extent are H/HS agencies doing the *right* work for the *right* people at the *right* time, and thus achieving meaningful results?

This is not to say, of course, that output measures are irrelevant. They *do* matter, and H/HS agencies should continue to track them. There will always be a needy individual or family that depends on timely and accurate delivery of programs and services. And there is certainly no shortage of

federal and state reporting requirements and guidelines dictating how agencies should capture and publish their results.

But transactional measures alone cannot support the kind of outcomes for which H/HS systems were created. And yet it's easy to become fixated on transactional measures because they are exactly the requirements for which agencies are likely to be held publicly accountable. As a result, the people who work in internal data reporting are driven largely by the capture and reporting of performance indicators that may have little or no relation to real-world results for clients.

In this environment, it's entirely possible for an agency to meet or exceed transactional performance metrics while experiencing breakdowns in the system—whether it's food stamps ending up in the wrong hands, millions of Medicaid dollars channeled to one doctor at multiple addresses, or a child who is seriously injured despite multiple visits by a child welfare agency. And when H/HS systems experience their worst failures where it matters the most, it often becomes obvious that traditional performance indicators do not guarantee meaningful, mission-critical outcomes for the people who rely on these services.

But this all-too-common pattern is beginning to change, thanks to the rapid proliferation of new technologies (AI, for example), the increased adoption of new methods such as human-centered design and behavioral nudges, and the introduction of more sophisticated data analytics.

Taken together, these new capabilities open up new possibilities for redefining H/HS—for moving beyond a strictly transactional business model to one that is also transformational.

## What might this look like?

What if we could know more about the people served and how the H/HS workforce serves them—and therefore, more about the potential impact of an agency's work on their lives and their future? What if we could know more about each child's day-to-day risk for maltreatment? What if we could get real-time reports that prompt a second look at a particular case? What if we could see which doctors' and clinics' billing practices seem disproportionately higher than others similarly situated? What if we could see which kinds of food stamp cases are more prone to error, and had a chance to double-check the work on those cases?

What if we could predict which families are more likely to achieve financial independence if a single factor in their lives changes, and predict those factors based on something in a case file or external data about similarly situated families? And what if we could do all this while determining their eligibility, so we would know which services are most likely to help them move forward?

These kinds of insights, paired with thoughtfully developed and targeted interventions, could help elevate H/HS from the realm of transactional service delivery, allowing agencies to measure the actual impact human services have on the lives of those they serve.

This playbook canvases innovations from across the H/HS ecosystem with an eye toward moving beyond transactional service delivery. The articles in this playbook are intended to help—even inspire—thinking about how a transactional business model can become a *transformational* one, capable of achieving potentially life-changing outcomes for the individuals and families H/HS programs serve in an efficient and cost-effective way.

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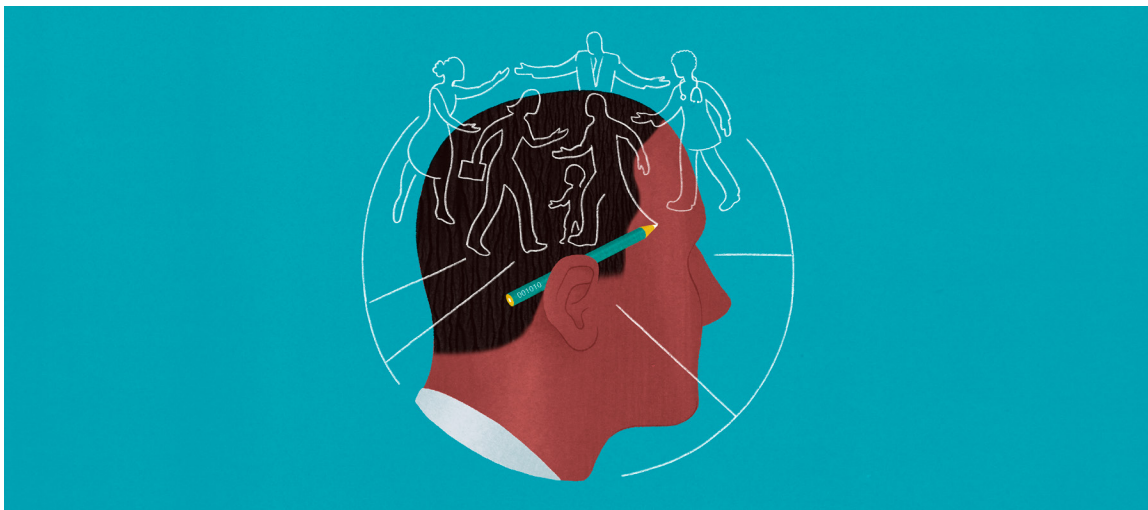
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# Elevating the human experience

Using human-centered design in health and human services programs



**H**EALTH AND HUMAN services (H/HS) programs play a vital role in people's lives by providing health care and other need-based social safety nets. Too often, the human experience of recipients engaging with these programs takes a back seat to business processes designed to meet administrative and compliance requirements.

Take the typical emergency room (ER) experience, for example. Across many rural communities, emergency rooms serve as the front door to the health care system. Patients go to the ER for all manner of medical needs—emergent and nonemergent—which frequently leads to long wait times.

Such was the case at Fort Apache Indian Reservation's Whiteriver Indian Hospital, which receives 40,000 visits every year—six times the national average for a department its size. With wait times up to six hours, nearly a quarter of patients left before they were seen. For a subset of these patients, what started out as relatively mild conditions worsened, and the cost of treating them subsequently rose.<sup>1</sup>

Enter human-centered design (HCD), which Marliza Rivera, a quality control officer at Whiteriver Indian Hospital, and her colleagues used to redesign the hospital check-in process. Under the new fast-track system, clinicians were stationed at the ER entrance and triaged patients

within 15 minutes of their arrival. Nonemergent cases were separated from emergent cases and treated without interrupting the flow of care to patients requiring emergency services. The result was a dramatic reduction in the percentage of patients leaving the ER untreated—down from 18 percent to just 1 percent during the pilot.<sup>2</sup> The results prompted a broader redesign of the hospital's emergency department to separate patients in need of emergency services from those with less urgent care needs, a US\$150,000 renovation that is estimated to save the hospital US\$6 million.<sup>3</sup>

## What is human-centered design?

HCD brings the human being into focus, starting with the premise that individuals' beliefs, values, feelings, and ambitions are important because they form the foundation for who they are and what they want from the organizations with which they engage. Human experience encompasses an organization's workforce and partners as well. Indeed, connecting with these stakeholders on a

more human level is critical to providing a better experience and delivering improved outcomes for the children and families H/HS agencies serve.

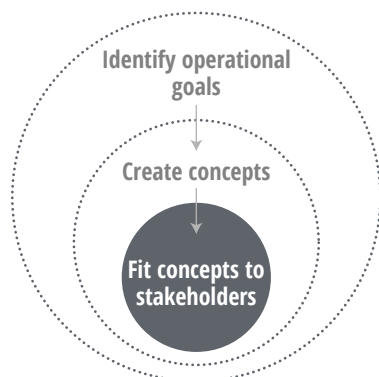
HCD puts people at the center of the design, development, and delivery of public policies and programs. It turns the traditional approach to problem-solving inside out, by starting with understanding key stakeholders to identify root causes and design for the white space of unmet needs (figure 1).

HCD involves deeply understanding individuals' unmet needs and using these insights to improve service design and delivery. A design-led approach brings end users into the room with public servants and other stakeholders to engage in rapid prototyping, testing, and iteration of solutions with the people for whom they are created. Not only can this deep collaboration speed the development and rollout of solutions, it can also mitigate risk by creating room for early experimentation. Stakeholders can quickly jettison unworkable ideas and focus on testing real-time, viable solutions before making costly investments in infrastructure and production (figure 2).

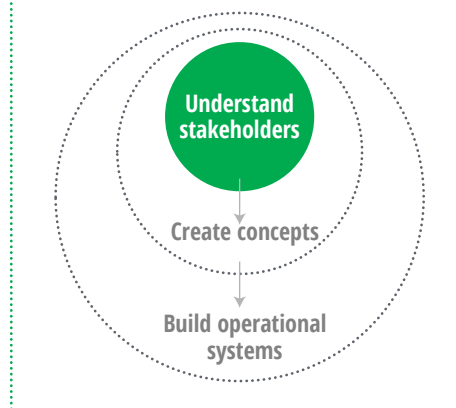
FIGURE 1

### Delivering a better human experience requires a mindset shift

#### TRADITIONAL PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH



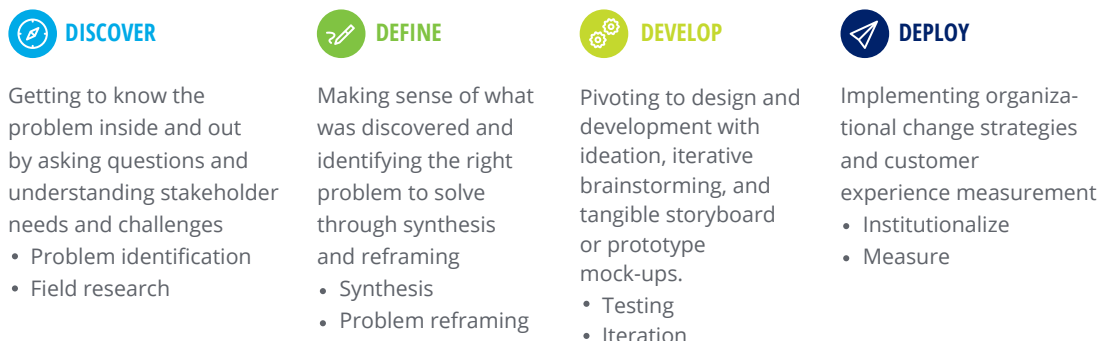
#### HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN APPROACH



Source: Deloitte analysis.

FIGURE 2

## The human-centered design process allows for early experimentation



Source: Deloitte analysis.

Solutions developed from the HCD framework hit the sweet spot: They are desirable, because they meet stakeholder and user needs; they have been tested and proven to be technically feasible; and they are financially and organizationally viable, meeting business requirements (figure 3).

## Applying human-centered design to health and human services

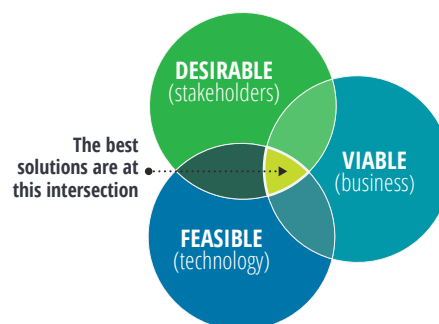
State, federal, and local H/HS agencies are beginning to see the value of HCD and are putting it to use across many program areas, including:

- **Integrated eligibility self-service:** Agencies use HCD to understand their complex network of stakeholders (including clients, state and county workers, community partners, and service partners, among others) and their diverse needs, motivations, and behaviors. Armed with this knowledge and empathy for their user base, they use tools such as journey mapping and service blueprinting to capture the interactions that are the most important to the stakeholder experience and that create the biggest challenges in managing benefits. They then use technology investments to solve for the moments that matter most.

- **Child welfare case management:** With scarcely any time available, social workers often have to choose between visiting a child or performing cumbersome data entry. Ethnographic research, combined with data analytics, is identifying important needs that social workers have, such as developing a comprehensive view of the child, eliminating redundant documentation efforts, and automating the process of capturing observations based on their field experiences and environment.

FIGURE 3

## Human-centered insights build the foundation for innovative solutions



Source: Deloitte analysis.

- **Workforce development:** Many states offer specialized workforce development programs to meet the needs of a wide range of individuals, from veterans and youth to disabled and underskilled workers. But people often find it hard to understand which programs they qualify for, let alone to comply with those programs' complex rules. By starting with a clear definition of what success looks like for the individual, states can begin to change complex policies, work practices, and technologies that prevent caseworkers from assisting individuals effectively. This approach can also spark innovative solutions that individuals can use to take control of their path to meaningful employment.

In each case, the value of HCD stems from its direct validation that a new project or program is aligned with the needs of stakeholders.

## Looking ahead

The more we can understand what people value, the more we can engage them with the stories and experiences that will resonate most, in order to create connections that are meaningful and mutually valuable for individuals and the organizations serving them. H/HS agencies that elevate the human experience can accelerate the improvement of policies, programs, and services and achieve better outcomes for the children and families that they serve.

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# Unlocking “household DNA” to deliver a personalized customer experience in health and human services

The value of segmentation



**W**E ALL HAVE a unique combination of characteristics that makes us individuals: our employment history, financial circumstances, and educational background, among other things. The environment in which we live, where we live, and with whom we live further shapes us as individuals. Moreover, we exhibit specific behaviors in our reactions to different situations. Taken together, these characteristics and dispositions make up a kind of distinct profile that we call “household DNA.”

Delivering personalized, outcome-based services that aren't cost-prohibitive has long been the holy grail in health and human services (H/HS). With the adoption of efforts such as real-time eligibility and mobile applications, increases in home placements and care, and the never-ending need to do more with less, face-to-face interactions with clients have been declining. These changes are driving H/HS agencies to rely more heavily on digitized information and, even more so, on client and household insights from what clients and other

sources provide. With the growth and availability of data, we have entered a period in which agencies are able to utilize an individual’s or household’s DNA to help provide personalized customer experiences.

## Exposing individual and household DNA

Take the case of Jennifer, for example. When Jennifer requests services, a lot of what we know about her and her household stems from what she has reported. Her application data may be augmented with data from other state, federal, third-party sources, or anywhere she may have left a digital footprint. While agencies may capture Jennifer’s data in a way that supports speed and accuracy, the data is not always presented in a way that easily exposes her individual or household DNA.

With this initial set of data the agency captured, what does it know about Jennifer’s DNA? Is she working? If she is, for how many hours? Is someone in the house receiving child support? Have people moved in and out of the house? Are there income fluctuations or personal safety issues? Are the kids in school full time? What about how Jennifer completed the application—did she enter her answers quickly, change her responses to certain questions, or complete it in a certain location or at a certain point in the day? While aggregating this data may move us closer to a 360-degree view of Jennifer, it doesn’t go far enough. It stops short of providing much-needed guidance for what services and types of interactions are likely to have the most impact for Jennifer and her household, based on her DNA. It also does not indicate what parts of her DNA matter the most for her current situation and the future.

## Segmenting customers with DNA commonalities

While each of us has our own unique DNA profile, we also share commonalities with others at different points in our lives. Commonalities may stem from financial or nonfinancial characteristics, how individuals interact with agencies, and other lifestyle behaviors. Some of these change over an individual’s lifetime while others remain constant. By grouping clients according to their individual or household DNA commonalities, distinct clusters or segments emerge. These customer segments offer agencies insight into distinct attributes of the different customer groups they serve. They can use these insights to determine individual service needs based on the desired outcome and the most effective method and frequency of communication. More broadly, segmentation can help them better understand the needs of the population that they serve and how those needs and preferences may evolve over time.

How might this apply to Jennifer? In her 18th month of assistance, Jennifer reports that her employer has reduced her hours by 10 hours a week and her husband has moved out. How has Jennifer’s DNA changed? How does she align with the individual and household DNA segments based on her latest changes? Going beyond her current circumstances, what specific services and interactions have helped people like Jennifer increase their employment hours and overall financial health, and improve their family situation? By isolating discrete events from the cohort group, agencies can identify and recommend the services that have successfully worked in the past for individuals with DNA similar to Jennifer.

## Getting started

When getting started with segmentation, it's important to keep the old maxim "Don't let perfect be the enemy of the good" in mind.

Selecting where the data should come from invariably raises questions about data quality, completeness, and accuracy. While many struggle to get over this hurdle, data does not need to be perfect and complete.

Agencies can narrow their data needs for creating the DNA segments by starting with a small population based on a focused business need, such as fostering financial independence. To address this topic, teams may identify potential characteristics that impact financial self-sufficiency, such as income (both type and amount), income fluctuations, time on assistance, assistance needed, household composition, and geography. By selecting those individuals that have achieved financial self-sufficiency, agencies can explore the characteristics that had the most influence on that outcome. As common characteristics start to emerge, agencies can uncover individual DNA segments across the population of individuals that are financially self-sufficient.

With an initial set of DNA segments that group the population according to financial factors that

support self-sufficiency, how can agencies use that information to change the way they serve clients? In other words, if Jennifer walks in tomorrow to request services, what could we do differently to personalize her experience based on what the data tells us about people like Jennifer who have successfully achieved financial self-sufficiency? By looking at Jennifer's DNA and what has worked for others with a similar profile who have gone on to achieve financial self-sufficiency, agencies can tailor the services and supports they deliver and the way in which they are delivered, to effectively personalize Jennifer's experience. So, the communications Jennifer receives through the customer contact center, in addition to SMS and text messages, along with the frequency of the communications, can all be personalized using her DNA.

It's important to note that segmentation is not a one-time exercise. As new program data becomes available and new data sources introduced, DNA characteristics may expand. This requires ongoing refinement to understand which characteristics truly differentiate the DNA segments, while still keeping the number of characteristics manageable. It's also important to recognize that as individuals change over time, so must their individual and household DNA profiles. Personalization, then, cannot be a one-time effort, but rather an ongoing exercise to be effective.

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# Charting new pathways

Navigating the future of work in health and human services



U S HEALTH AND human services (H/HS) leaders know the challenges that their more than 2.5 million staff members face: low wages, high turnover, and growing caseloads.<sup>1</sup> This helps explain why workforce and talent management are top concerns for agency leaders. Despite a keen awareness of these issues, only 15 percent of leaders say they have a well-defined strategy for workforce management.<sup>2</sup> The future of work, characterized by a growing workforce ecosystem, increased mobility, demographic shifts, and technological advancements, is opening up new possibilities for addressing these lingering challenges.<sup>3</sup> Looking to the future of work uncovers new ways of acquiring, developing, and managing the workforce, enabling H/HS agencies to focus on their core mission of serving citizens in need.

H/HS agencies can optimize their workforce for the future of work by reexamining three factors:

- **Where** can virtual work, distributed work, remote work, or redesigned workplaces be deployed to induce greater productivity?
- **Who** can do the work across the workforce ecosystem—from traditional full-time and part-time employees to contractors, freelancers, gig workers, and crowds?
- **What** work presently done by humans can be complemented by smart machines and automation using technology advances?



## Where: Physical proximity

We exist in a completely interconnected world, which opens up new options for where work gets done. This means that work is no longer confined to a physical office location. Leveraging a virtual workforce strategy allows states to more efficiently deliver services on multiple fronts: realizing cost savings from reduced physical office footprints, routing the right work to the right worker at the right time, and providing a better overall experience for customers and employees.

Advances in productivity, mobility, and collaboration tools, as well as the next wave of virtual presence technological innovation, have accelerated the ability to create a flexible workplace. One US state was able to implement a model that allowed up to 75 percent of its overall workforce to work from home. Underpinning the advancement of virtual work are strong employee engagement and a workplace culture that supports digital and agile ways of working. H/HS leaders at the forefront of fostering this culture are positioned to reap the benefits of a more engaged and productive workforce, thus attracting talent more effectively and reducing voluntary turnover rates.

## Who: Talent

The demographic drivers of the future of work are reshaping the H/HS workforce. The number of career changes in an average life is increasing, as the concept of having a job for life gives way to the next generation of workers eager to engage in new challenges and try new things. At the same time, the increasing lifespan of workers has spurred longer careers, as well as retirees reentering the workforce.<sup>4</sup> This, coupled with the explosion of contingent work, means that H/HS leaders now have access to a more varied workforce ecosystem.

A number of states are already redefining the H/HS workforce ecosystem by rethinking what work can be done through various contingent arrangements. One H/HS agency formed an arrangement that allowed an outside contractor to complete customer registrations, enabling state staff to focus on determining eligibility for services. In other states, new models have emerged, such as partnerships with local universities to attract a workforce to process specialty appeals work without adding to the state's permanent payroll. Taking advantage of these workforce segments has enhanced the ability of H/HS agencies to upskill the workforce and enables staff to do the kind of work that focuses on the core mission of the agency.

## What: Automation level

Government hiring is down across the board, and public sector workers make up the smallest portion of the workforce since 1967.<sup>5</sup> With no sign that this trend will reverse soon, leaders must look to automation to help fill the talent gap currently found in many government agencies. With little to no human input, smart technology and process automation are capable of augmenting worker output by completing routine and repetitive tasks, allowing workers to focus on more complex tasks that require empathy or a personal touch.<sup>6</sup>

States are exploring a number of ways to incorporate automation into their existing processes. H/HS agencies are piloting ways to automate highly repetitive, labor-intensive tasks that do not require worker intervention. For example, one state agency found a way to automate adding newborn babies to an existing case, making the process four minutes faster per case. Four minutes may not seem like a lot, but consider this: If an eligibility specialist processes eight newborns on average in a week, it adds up to an extra half hour per worker per week.

## Getting started

The future of work is about expansion, stretching the thinking about where work can be done, who can do the work, and what tasks can be effectively supplemented with automation (figure 1).

Emerging technologies and workforce options can enable agencies to attract talent and leverage new operating models to better serve citizens. The organizations most likely to succeed will understand the risks and rewards of testing new models and piloting technologies, while also understanding the importance of starting small, experimenting, and scaling quickly.

FIGURE 1

### Three dimensions are changing the future of work

▲ Current work options    ▲ Future work options



Source: Deloitte analysis.

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# AI-augmented human services

Using cognitive technologies to transform program delivery



IN THE CONSUMER realm, technologies based on artificial intelligence (AI) are slowly changing the way we manage everyday tasks. Take the driving app Waze, for example. Waze uses crowdsourced data, social networking conversations, and cognitive learning to help shave time off daily commutes by providing the most efficient route based on current conditions and individual driving preferences.

Or consider products like Nest. Gone are the days of paying to heat or cool your house while no one's home. When people are at home, Nest learns what temperature household occupants prefer at different times of the day, automatically adjusting

home thermostats to help users save money on their energy bills.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, intelligent personal assistants, such as Siri<sup>®2</sup> and Alexa, have helped reduce the time required to carry out routine tasks such as turning off the lights or ordering dinner, enabling their users to refocus limited attention on higher-order tasks.<sup>3</sup>

Similar AI technologies can be put to use in human services, to help agencies cut costs, improve decision-making, free up significant labor hours for more critical tasks, and deliver better, faster services.

## Understanding AI and its application in human services

To better understand AI's potential application in human services, it is critical to learn about some of the key automation and AI-based technologies that are impacting our lives. These technologies include robotic process automation (RPA), rule-based systems, machine learning, computer vision, speech recognition, natural language processing, and robotics (figure 1).

Government entities are putting these technologies to work today in an effort to reduce the administrative burden on caseworkers, address long wait times, triage high caseloads based on risk, and free up staff time to deal with more complex cases (figure 2).

### REDUCING APPLICATION PROCESSING TIME THROUGH RPA

Often caseworkers must manually verify the eligibility of beneficiaries by fetching data from

multiple systems. Take San Diego County, for example. County caseworkers use two different systems for eligibility verifications. The first system stores all the required documents to verify eligibility. The second system has 500 different application forms, and each form or combination of forms requires different documents. The problem is that the two systems do not communicate with each other. As a result, caseworkers open forms from one system and then look for supporting documents in the other system. Since there are 500 forms, these requirements create hundreds of business rules, which a caseworker has to verify manually. The process is complex and consumes huge amounts of caseworkers' time.<sup>4</sup>

To automate the process and connect both systems, the county deployed RPA software. The software automatically looks at the open forms on a caseworker's screen, sifts through the verification fields, identifies relevant documents, and then pulls up those documents from the other system.

FIGURE 1

## Robotic process automation and other cognitive technologies are becoming more common

### RULES-BASED SYSTEMS

**Rules-based systems** capture and use experts' knowledge to provide answers to tricky problems that are governed by fixed rule-sets.

### SPEECH RECOGNITION

**Speech recognition** transcribes human speech automatically and accurately. The technology improves as machines collect more examples of conversation.

### COMPUTER VISION

**Computer vision** is the ability to identify objects, scenes, and activities in naturally occurring images.

### MACHINE LEARNING

**Machine learning** takes place without explicit programming. By trial and error, computers learn how to learn, mining information to discover patterns in data that can help predict future events.

### NATURAL LANGUAGE PROCESSING

**Natural language processing** refers to the task of organizing and understanding language in a human way. Combined with machine learning, a system can scan websites for discussions of specific topics.

### ROBOTICS

**Robotics** is the creation and use of machines to perform automated physical functions. Examples include drones, robots used for disaster response, and robot assistants in home health care.

### ROBOTIC PROCESS AUTOMATION (RPA)

**RPA** robots are software programs designed to automate transactional, rules-based tasks by mimicking human interactions.

Source: Deloitte analysis.



FIGURE 2

## Human services can use AI to address multiple pain points

CASEWORKERS	
USE CASES	PAIN POINTS ADDRESSED
Automating verification	Compliance with myriad integrated eligibility rules
Automating documentation and reporting	Large, unmanageable workload
Predicting children at high risk of abuse	Huge caseloads; confusion over which cases to prioritize
Outcome-based targeted programs based on machine learning algorithms	Lack of integrated data to solve clients' problems holistically
CITIZENS	
USE CASES	PAIN POINTS ADDRESSED
Auto-filling application forms	Tedious application process
Addressing queries via chatbot	Long wait times to resolve issues
Real-time language translation	Language issues for non-English speakers
Personalized service delivery through machine learning	Noncustomized solutions

Source: Deloitte analysis.

The entire manual task was replaced with a single keystroke. As a result of using RPA, the time it takes to approve a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application was cut from 60 days to less than a week.<sup>5</sup>

### USING VIRTUAL ASSISTANTS TO REDUCE WORKLOADS

Australia's Department of Human Services (DHS) is using cognitive technologies to help reduce its staff workload. The department deployed an internal virtual assistant called Roxy to answer queries from case-processing officers related to the rules and regulations of the department's programs. Roxy uses machine learning and natural language processing to understand human language and respond to requests.<sup>6</sup> Roxy is currently responding to more than 78 percent of the questions being put to it.<sup>7</sup> Prior to Roxy, DHS staff would call human experts for assistance. Now human experts only get involved in complex queries.<sup>8</sup> According to former DHS chief technology officer Charles McHardie,

"It's been quite successful at reducing their workload."<sup>9</sup>

### FLAGGING CHILD WELFARE CASES AT HIGH RISK FOR CHILD FATALITIES

Oklahoma's Department of Human Services has used cognitive technology to help identify child welfare cases most likely to lead to child fatalities. The department partnered with Eckerd Kids, whose software uses machine learning to predict cases with a high probability of child fatalities. Factors such as a child under the age of three, intergenerational abuse, young parents, mental health problems, and a history of substance abuse tend to be correlated with a high risk of child fatalities.<sup>10</sup> Once high-risk cases get flagged, they go through a detailed review, and the input is shared with front-line staff so that they can establish a course of action that abates risk and improves outcomes.<sup>11</sup> This helps field staff target investigations based on risk rather than relying on random sampling.

## Potential savings from automation

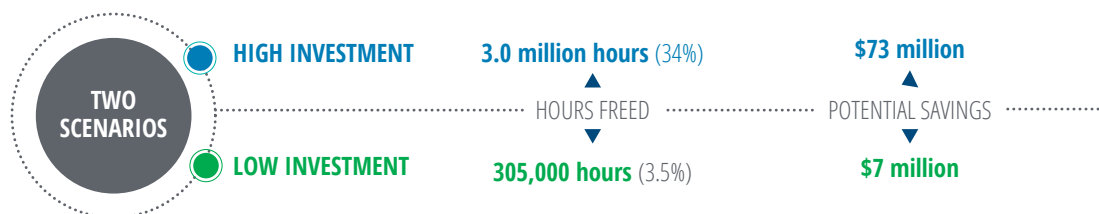
Today, typical human services employees allocate their labor among a “basket” of tasks. By breaking jobs into individual activities and analyzing how suitable each is to automation, we can project the number of labor hours that could potentially be freed up by investing in AI-based technologies. Our analysis of human service agencies in a large Midwestern state found that automation could yield time savings of up to 34 percent. This amounts to 3 million hours freed up, yielding potential annual savings of US\$73 million (figure 3). At the low end of the investment spectrum, automation could still save 305,000 hours annually, with potential savings of US\$7 million.

AI-based technologies are already having a profound impact on consumers. These technologies could be further applied to human services programs to help reduce backlogs, cut costs, overcome resource constraints, free caseworkers to spend more time with families, inject intelligence into scores of processes and systems, and handle many other tasks humans can't easily do on our own.

It's highly unusual for a business improvement to increase speed, enhance quality, and reduce costs at the same time, but AI-based technologies offer that possibility. For human services workers, it could mean a future where vast amounts of their time are freed up thanks to automation, their effectiveness is enhanced, and their capabilities extended with machine learning.

FIGURE 3

### Potential savings from AI



**Investment scenarios:**

- High investment (AI-assisted tasks AI speed up by 200% on average)
- Low investment (AI-assisted tasks AI speed up by 20% on average)

**Methodology:** The data is for a large US Midwestern state. The analysis considered tasks as the unit of analysis. The automation potential of each task was calculated based on task importance, skill requirement, work volume, and technological barriers. Then Monte Carlo simulation was used to describe two different scenarios for the likely effects of automation on these tasks. The two scenarios represent a high and low level of government investment in automation.

Source: Deloitte analysis.

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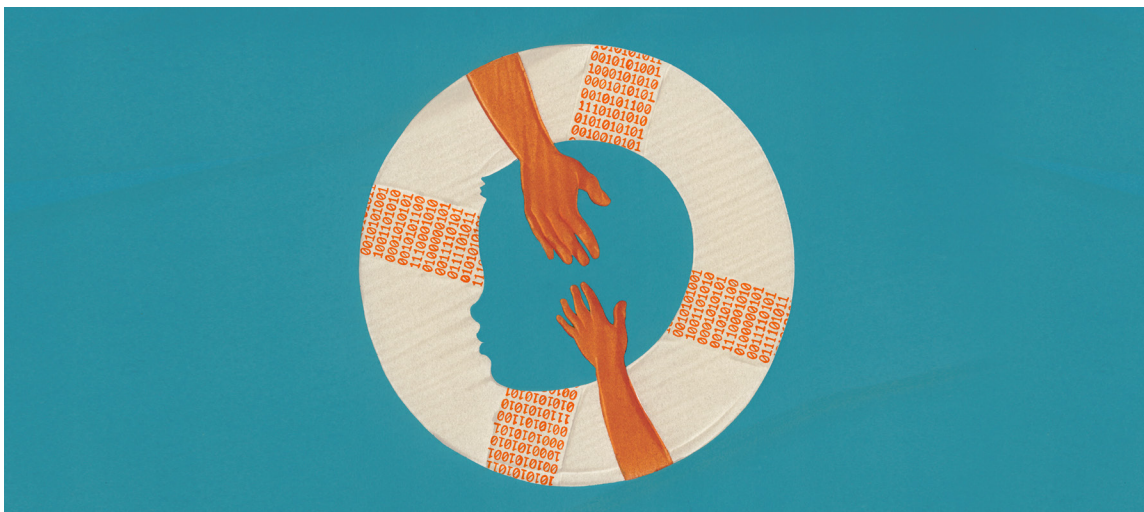
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# Next-gen child support

Improving outcomes for families



**A**RGUABLY ONE OF the most effective federal programs of all time, child support now faces new challenges—arising from dramatic changes in our society—that threaten its future success.

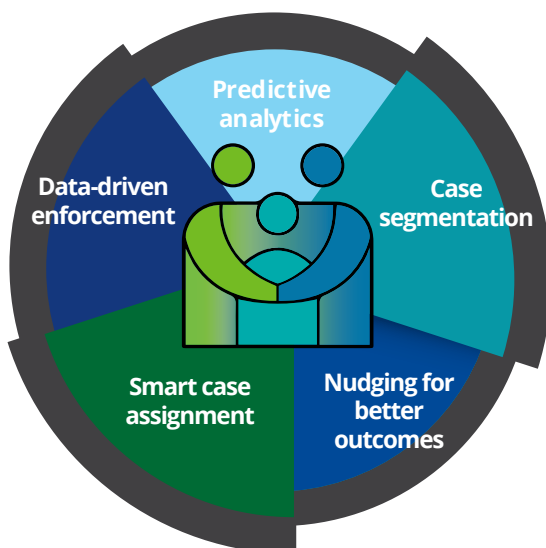
Changing family structures and circumstances, rising incarceration rates, and a challenging economy all make it harder than ever for child support programs to collect payments. Many state programs rely on outdated mainframe computer systems to support their operations, lack the resources for costly upgrades, and struggle to attract and retain high-performing employees—especially technical employees—needed to bring the program into the future.

To succeed in the coming years, the child support program will need to embrace new ways of operating (figure 1), including:

- New technologies that tap into data within agencies, maximizing the outcomes of communication and enforcement strategies
- A renewed purpose that ensures that the program meets parents and families where they are today, recognizing the changing social landscape
- New approaches to workforce optimization to help create a better employee experience for the child support workforce

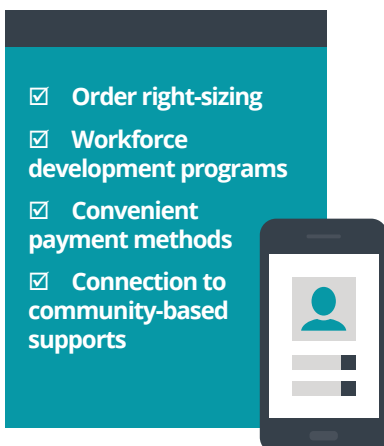
FIGURE 1

## Next-gen child support



### Child support 2.0: The data revolution

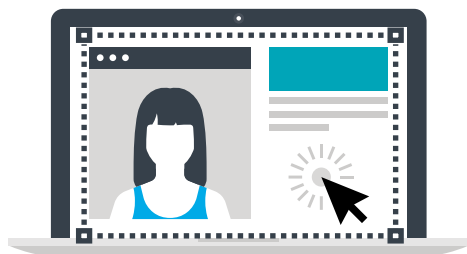
America's child support agencies possess a treasure trove of historical data on the cases they manage. If truly put to use, this data can be leveraged to unleash significant value. Taken together, a suite of techniques—from predictive analytics to matching cases to the right caseworkers to employing behavioral nudges—form a holistic, data-driven approach to improving child support outcomes for all parties.



### Child support as a service: Modern enforcement

The push for better customer service is critical for delivering better outcomes for the families the program serves. Program leaders have an opportunity to improve performance by meeting people where they are:

- Connecting parents to services that can help them provide for their children
- Modifying support orders for struggling parents, particularly the incarcerated
- Making it easier for parents to meet their obligations



### Modernizing the employee experience: Boosting workforce engagement

Highly effective organizations recognize that people ultimately drive performance. Understanding employees' needs, taking steps to address pain points that might be unique to a certain group (for example, new hires or seasoned staff), along with empowering caseworkers with modern tools and technologies can all boost engagement, satisfaction, and, in turn, performance.

Source: Deloitte analysis.

## Child support 2.0: The data revolution

America's child support agencies possess a treasure trove of historical data on the cases they manage. Typically, this data is accessed only after a parent has fallen significantly behind, often on an ad hoc basis to retroactively determine what went wrong and why. If truly put to use, however, it can be proactively leveraged to unleash significant value.

Thanks to advances in data analytics, caseworkers can make use of this data to craft solutions that are tailored to the unique needs of cases and also have the best chance of succeeding. Consider Florida's Child Support Program.

The Florida Child Support Program uses data to guide team members; its goal is to select the compliance actions that will result in the greatest return on investment (ROI) for the program. This is accomplished by using a predictive model based upon two specific parameter groups: the financial compliance levels of cases, and the indicators of the parents' ability to pay (criminal history, employment, institutionalization status, and disabilities).

Based on the outcome of the predictive analytics model and the ROI of each potential remedy, Florida's system identifies the best course of action for a case. The model prioritizes remedial actions that have the largest ROI—bringing in the most collection money when compared with the costs—and are therefore likely to be the most effective and efficient.

"Florida uses a tailored enforcement approach," explains Ann Coffin, the director of Florida's Child Support Program, noting that the system automatically analyzes data and then applies business rules set by the program. Since some enforcement actions, such as contempt proceedings, can be very expensive and

time-consuming, the use of analytics helps prioritize the action that has the greatest chance of success.<sup>1</sup>

## Child support as a service: Modern enforcement

When parents have little or no steady income, they may not have the financial means to regularly pay child support.

"The next frontier for the federal child support program is this: How do we work with the hardest to serve?" says Frances Pardus-Abbadessa, executive deputy commissioner of New York City's Office of Child Support Enforcement (NYCOCSE).<sup>2</sup>

For Pardus-Abbadessa, child support enforcement goals have to go beyond mere collection to helping children stay out of poverty and strengthening families. This is no easy task. Unlike the performance boosts that have come from greater interstate cooperation, automated payments, and expanded enforcement measures, efforts such as job training and other life skills programs can be much more labor-intensive and variable in their impact.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, Pardus-Abbadessa sees a gap that needs filling. "We believe most parents want to support their children, but there isn't much in the program today to help those parents who are struggling to make their payments," she says.<sup>4</sup> "This is a challenge, but it is also an opportunity. Child support is one of the few programs that works with both parents. We could use the program to help connect fathers to work and to ensure their connection to their children stays strong."<sup>5</sup>

One thing that doesn't help anyone is an unrealistically high support order and the unsustainable debt that soon follows. "Massive debt can have a lot of negative impacts," says



Pardus-Abbadessa. They include driving parents to under-the-table work, driving a wedge between parents and their children, and fostering a feeling of despair—which leads to giving up. It also creates a lot of negative attitudes toward the child support program.<sup>6</sup>

To help parents pay off their debt, NYCOCSE sponsored a “Pay It Off” program in 2016, which offered a US\$2 credit for each dollar of debt payment received from qualifying parents. The program reduced debt by nearly US\$4 million, or about US\$7,000 per participating parent—an amount that can make a huge difference for people of limited means. Other programs, including an effort to right-size orders, saw the percentage of low-income parents making their payments increase from 41 percent to 62 percent.<sup>7</sup>

## Modernizing the employee experience: Boosting workforce engagement

Twenty-five percent of graduating college students rank government as one of the top three industries where they want to work, yet a much smaller percentage actually decide to launch a career in the public sector.<sup>8</sup> And while attracting new talent remains a challenge, retaining an agency’s current workforce and keeping them engaged and motivated can be equally daunting. Given that replacing an employee costs an agency an average of US\$150,000 in addition to the salary of the new hire, improving the employee experience and retaining staff is increasingly top of mind for many child support directors.<sup>9</sup>

When it comes to helping employees feel more connected to the workplace, even small efforts can go a long way. Consider the case of Arizona’s Department of Child Support Services (DCSS), part of the US Department of Economic Security.

DCSS launched a colleague engagement initiative that takes a “people first, people always” approach. The initiative emphasizes three behaviors: contribution, teamwork, and growth. Staff members win recognition for going above and beyond, for length of service, or for positive customer feedback, and they are encouraged to nominate colleagues for awards. The agency implements weekly huddles to keep open lines of communication, maintain focused goals, and increase team spirit. Also, the Department of Economic Security Mentor Program helps employees identify their strengths, weaknesses, needs, priorities, and career goals through coaching and professional networking.

At its heart, Arizona’s colleague engagement initiative is really about checking in with people and hearing their stories. It’s about giving each employee a buddy to hold them accountable for professional and personal goals, recognizing employees for good work, and creating the right conditions to build better connections in the workplace.

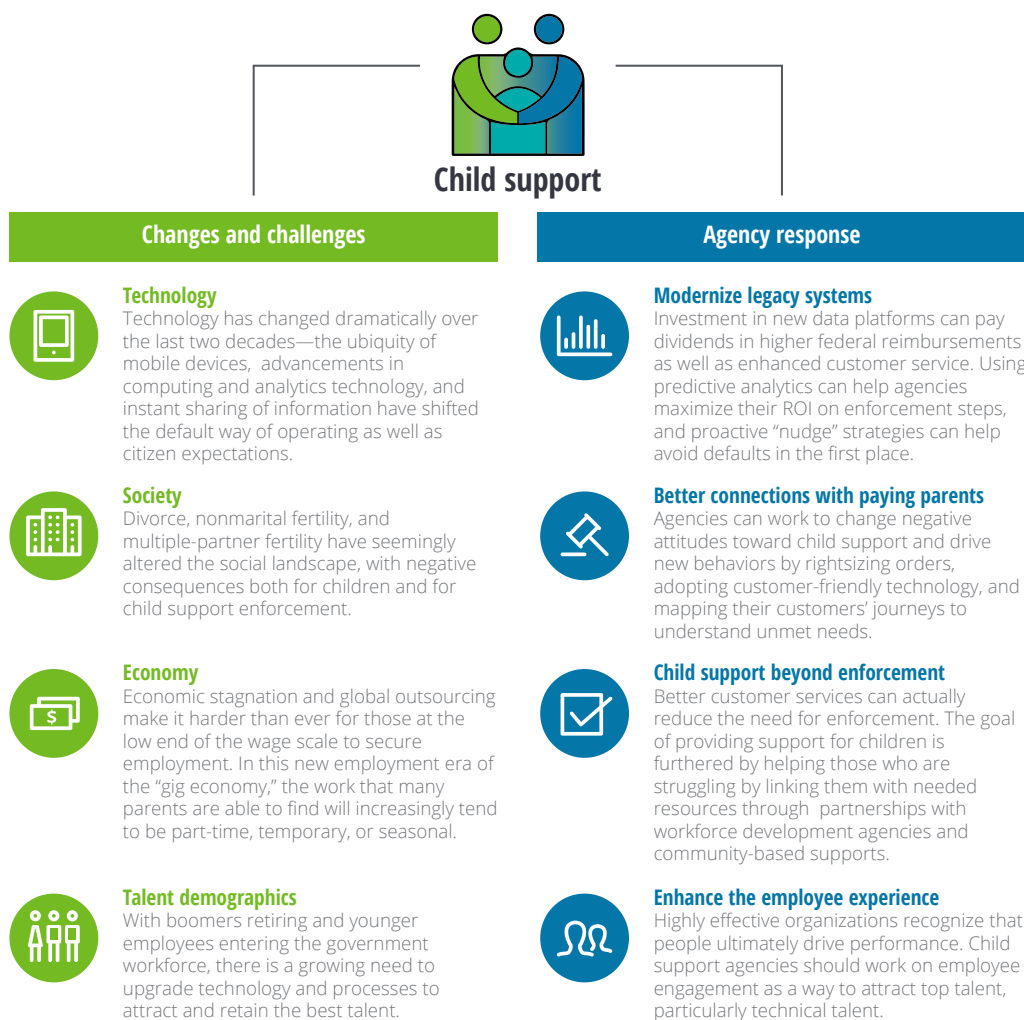
As a result of these efforts, the Arizona Department of Economic Security saw a five-fold increase in its overall employee engagement ratio in just one year.<sup>10</sup>

## Looking ahead

Throughout its history, the child support program has adapted successfully to changing circumstances. When it comes to ensuring that parents with means contribute to the upbringing of their children, the program is now quite successful. To sustain this success and even improve in the future, the program must continue to evolve, embracing new technologies and new approaches to service, and improving workforce engagement (figure 2). The welfare of millions of children depends on the ability of child support agencies to deliver the best possible service.

FIGURE 2

## Evolving child support for the modern age



Source: Deloitte analysis.

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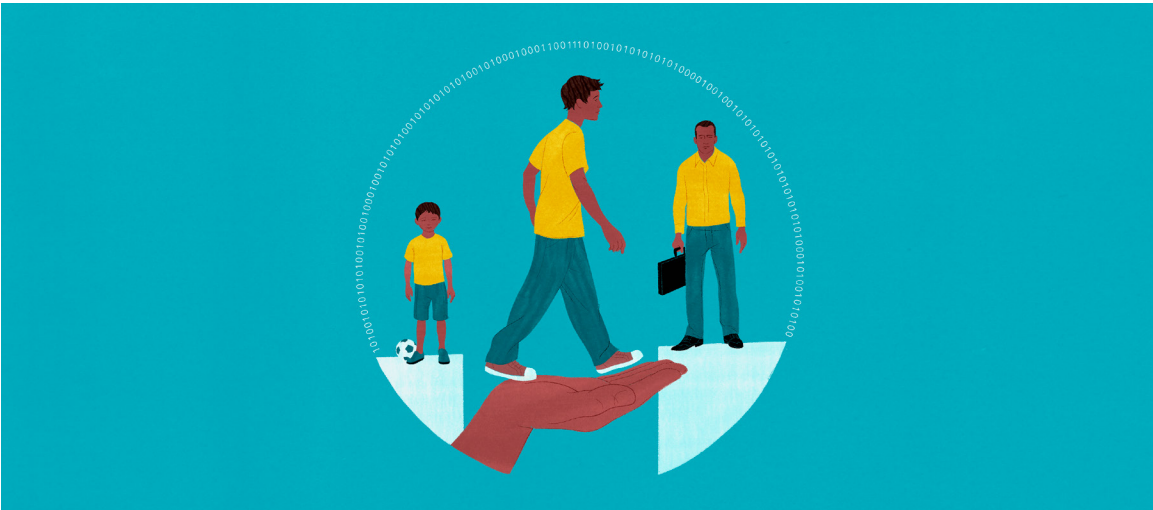
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# The case for a youth portal

Supporting adolescents on the way to adulthood



**A**CROSS THE UNITED States, foster care caseloads continue to rise. At last count, there were nearly 443,000 children and youth in the US foster care system, with more than 123,000 waiting for adoption (figure 1). Of those

awaiting adoption, nearly 10 percent (13,451) are in the age range of 15–17.<sup>1</sup> These teenagers are adopted at a lower rate than younger children, wait longer to be adopted, and are more likely to age out of the system without a stable place to call home,

FIGURE 1

## US foster care system caseloads continue to rise

Year	Number in foster care	Number waiting to be adopted
2013	400,394	102,808
2014	414,129	106,610
2015	427,328	109,881
2016	436,551	116,608
2017	442,995	123,437

Source: Children’s Bureau, *The AFCARS report*, US Department of Health and Human Services, August 10, 2018.

all of which may adversely impact their life trajectories upon emancipation.

Without the benefit of a stable, supportive home, young people who age out of foster care face a bleak future. According to iFoster, within four years of aging out of foster care:

- Seventy percent will be on government assistance
- Half will be unemployed
- Half will experience homelessness
- A quarter will not have completed high school
- Fewer than 12 percent will earn a college degree<sup>2</sup>

The result is a “US\$1 million economic burden to society for each young person we fail.”<sup>3</sup>

While the vast majority of states have extended eligibility for foster care to age 21, the reality is many young people still opt to leave the system when they turn 18.<sup>4</sup> If states can’t convince them to stay, the question becomes, how do they best equip them with the support they need to transition successfully?

In this article, we lay out our vision for a robust youth portal to support youth currently in care, those transitioning, and those who have exited the system. The goal is to support these adolescents during a critical period on the road to adulthood.

## Reimagining supports for adolescents transitioning to adulthood

Turning 18 marks an important rite of passage into adulthood. For youth outside the foster care

system, that passage almost always comes equipped with a lifeline back to a parent or relative who continues to play an important role long after they have left the nest. It’s not unusual for parents or relatives to continue to perform various functions to ease the transition to adulthood, including:

- Storing important documents and records
- Transferring tacit knowledge and guidance to navigate adulthood
- Providing moral support through life’s ups and downs

Foster youth need and deserve these same supports.

Federal legislation mandates transition planning, and many states have made it easier for youth who are approaching emancipation to access resources, consolidating those links in a single place. But vulnerable youth need more robust support to help them overcome the significant disadvantage from which they start their journey to adulthood.

A robust youth portal for a foster care system should change lives for the better. Such a portal would:

- Provide information in a style that is digestible, dynamic, and easy to use
- Be relevant and focused on issues facing youth
- Provide engaging material that attracts youth to visit
- Provide functionality that supports their needs

Here we examine the breadth of functionality and ease of use such a portal could include.

## Virtual safe for important records

Before emancipation, states are required to furnish foster care youth with copies of their birth certificates, Social Security cards, health insurance information, medical records, and driver's licenses or state-issued IDs. The American Bar Association recommends that youth aging out of foster care should receive much more, including a full accounting of their past, plus the documentation they would need if they wished to reenter care, access their case files, apply for financial aid, and so on. Those documents would include:

- Credit report
- Proof of citizenship or legal residency
- Letter including the dates that they were within jurisdiction of the court
- Letter including a statement that they were in foster care, in compliance with financial aid documentation requirements
- Educational records
- Documentation of a health power of attorney
- Clear and age-appropriate written instructions on filing a petition to reenter care, including a completed sample petition
- The process for accessing their case file
- Death certificates for their parents (where applicable)
- Termination of parental rights orders (where applicable)<sup>5</sup>

Given the well-documented housing challenges that youth contend with when they age out of foster

care, a virtual safe for storing these documents would be a tremendous help. A youth portal would, among other things, provide a repository that youth could access while they're in care, in transition, or after they have exited. The virtual safe would also provide an audit trail of the time a young person has spent as a ward of the state, including their placements and relevant contact information. This information would let youth reach back out to caseworkers, adults, and mentors with whom they formed connections and meaningful relationships during their years in care.

## Actuating transition plans

The Fostering Connections Act requires transition plans for youth exiting foster care. Ninety days before their 18th birthday, a young person is to sit down with his or her caseworker and designated representative(s) to map out a transition plan. Among other things, this plan addresses housing, education, employment, mentoring, and continued support services.

This static plan could be made far more dynamic and actionable with:

- A tailored list of resources and supports that map to the transition plan
- Behavioral nudges to prompt specific actions by youth and caseworkers
- Alerts to tell the young person, for example, about openings for suitable housing and jobs
- A tool for tracking progress against the young person's own goals and aspirations

A well-conceived youth portal would bring transition plans to life for digital natives. It would animate a plan by breaking it down into a set of discrete actions, along a timeline, with prompts to



take action and engage with relevant resources that can further the young person's goals.

Youth in foster care could start using the portal at around age 14, well before they are ready to plan for emancipation. At that point, the portal would offer age-appropriate modules in areas such as financial literacy and money management. It could provide supports for tutoring, mentoring, and college prep, and provide strength and aptitude testing paired with targeted job placement, helping youth to start building their résumés and think about future careers. It could also provide mental health modules to help them understand the trauma that brought them to child welfare in the first place and connect them to appropriate counseling resources.

These functions would introduce younger teens to the youth portal, getting them accustomed to using it long before they start planning their transitions. It would serve as a pseudo “nagging parent,” getting young people started on activities they should be doing at various stages of adolescence, to ease the transition to adulthood and set themselves up for greater success.

Posttransition, the portal could continue to guide young people through the ordinary tasks of adulthood. It could prompt them to take actions such as making annual doctor's appointments, scheduling routine dental care, attending counseling sessions, preparing and filing taxes, monitoring their credit rating, staying up to date on vehicle and voter registrations, creating a budget, saving for retirement, and accessing relevant benefits.

## Fostering relationship development

Too many youths exit foster care with underdeveloped relationship-building skills. But

we know that the ability to develop lifelong connections and build meaningful relationships is critical for success.

A robust youth portal would help to assess the ability to forge and sustain new relationships. It would also connect youth leaving foster care with mentorship programs within their community, to help them develop meaningful relationships with adults outside the system, as well as with peers who have been in their shoes and successfully navigated life after foster care.

This type of matchmaking is already starting to emerge in the child welfare arena. Take Colorado's “I'm into” app, for example. The idea for this app emerged after the state's youth development plan identified a need to better connect at-risk youth with organizations in the state that can help them. Currently in development, the app aims to engage youth in the process of self-discovery, both to increase self-awareness and to elicit information needed to match them with the appropriate local organizations.

Because nonprofits and private providers offer the most robust resources, states should connect with these resources, and in a frictionless way, so that no one slips through the cracks.

## Looking ahead

The transition to adulthood is a tumultuous one under the best of circumstances. It is often defined by struggles with identity, sexuality, and relationships. Mental health issues are often first manifested during this time, and suicide is a major cause of death for older adolescents.

Add in the additional challenges that youth face in foster care, and it's easy to see why the stakes are so high for getting this critical transition right.

Increasingly, state and federal officials are affirming the need to do more for youth aging out of foster care. A portal that assembles a robust set of tools to holistically meet the needs of foster care youth, in a user-friendly and engaging way, can support states in their efforts and help them to accomplish even more.

Whether or not a state is replacing its child welfare information system, it can add a youth portal to its digital portfolio. The rewards, in terms of better outcomes for foster care youth, are well worth the effort.

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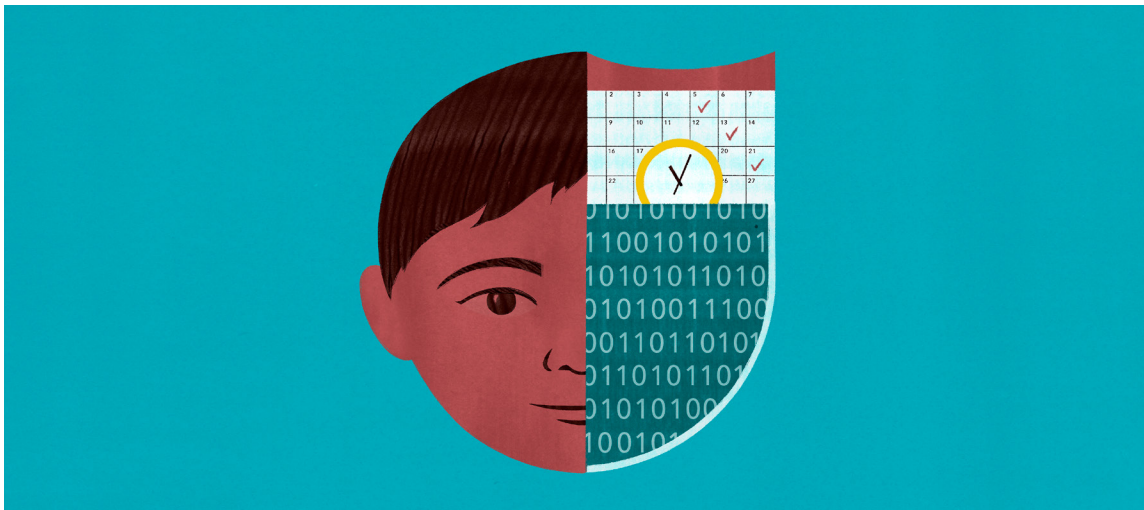
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# Beyond case management

Better child welfare outcomes through relationship management



CHILD WELFARE CASEWORKERS serve on the frontlines of protecting America's most vulnerable children. Poverty, neglect, violence, parental substance use, and physical abuse are common among children that come into contact with the child welfare system. Ensuring their safety often involves working with fractured families and making difficult decisions—when to remove a child from a home, place a child in foster care, or reunify a child with his or her family—all while minimizing the trauma children experience. It's a tremendous responsibility carried out under some of the most challenging circumstances.

While a caseworker's job is complex by nature, workplace realities make it even harder. High caseloads constrain the amount of time a caseworker can spend with any given family.

According to the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute, the caseload of the typical child welfare caseworker is often twice the accepted national standard.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, turnover rates for child welfare agencies hover around 30 percent nationally.<sup>2</sup> The result is that cases frequently change hands and are touched by multiple caseworkers over time.

In addition, many caseworkers rely on decades-old legacy case management systems (CMS) to support their day-to-day work. Time spent struggling with the shortcomings of these systems is time *not* spent with the children and families under their care.

One problem with many CMS is that they lack an integrated view of a child's or family's engagement with various health and human services programs.

That leaves caseworkers to manually piece together data from different sources to develop a holistic view of the children and families they serve.

Nor do CMS adequately support decision-making. These systems were designed as data collection machines that agencies then use to comply with state and federal reporting requirements. The case file a CMS produces is hard to navigate and doesn't put the relationship between agency and client at the center of the system's design.

Moreover, when an agency wants to add new capabilities to a legacy CMS, such as predictive analytics or artificial intelligence (AI), that initiative takes a great deal of work.

Any technology solution used to support the critical business processes of child welfare should address these challenges. It should allow agencies to build more effective relationships with the children they serve, while being:

- Modifiable, to keep pace with changes in policy and business processes
- Less costly to own and maintain
- Easy to learn and use

For agencies seeking to develop better support for child welfare caseworkers, customer relationship management (CRM) platforms can play a critical role.

## Enter CRM: Child protection through relationship management

CRM platforms are designed to help organizations manage their relationships with new or existing customers. As integrated, data-driven software solutions, CRM platforms can improve the way

agencies interact with and manage long-term relationships with the children they serve, from childhood, through adolescence, and into adulthood.

CRM platforms can help tackle some of the long-standing challenges caseworkers and child welfare agencies face.

### CASEWORKER CHALLENGES

**Managing multiple communication channels:** A client's case involves far more communications than simple case notes can capture. A system that creates one big set of notes can cause problems when a case changes hands and a new caseworker must get up to speed quickly. A CRM platform provides a configurable foundation with an intelligent, structured way to ask questions and capture notes, using CRM techniques fine-tuned over years of experience. Lacking this kind of intelligence, traditional CMS rely on caseworkers using their own experience to figure out how best to gather data from clients.

**Supporting work that takes place outside the office:** Most caseworkers split their time between the office and other locations. Agencies that want to let caseworkers access a traditional CMS from mobile devices must have that capability built for them. CRM platforms come with built-in mobile capabilities.

**Developing data-driven action plans:** CRM platforms let caseworkers analyze data and trends within their caseloads, helping them develop strategies to promote better outcomes for the client. While this is a fundamental function of CRM platforms, it has typically been added to CMS solutions only as an afterthought.

**Reacting to changes in family structure:** As household structures can change over the course of a case, it's often hard for caseworkers to keep track of the people in a child's life. CRM platforms

automatically monitor changing relationships, helping caseworkers better understand how the network surrounding a child evolves over time.

## DEPARTMENTAL CHALLENGES

**Growing caseloads, reduced budgets:** The population of youth and families involved with child welfare agencies continues to grow, requiring agencies to do more with less. Cloud-based CRM platforms are cost-efficient. They can also synthesize operational data, which the agency can use to gauge its performance and facilitate ongoing improvements.

**Constant training needs:** With high staff turnover, an agency must quickly onboard a steady stream of new, inexperienced staff and deploy them to the field.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, as policies change, the agency must update its technology and related training for new and existing staff. CRM platforms provide the ability to “configure” rather than “develop” solutions, enabling swift changes that can keep pace with new requirements. These platforms let agencies develop different interfaces for different users, making it easier to train disparate populations.

**Facilitating collaboration:** CRM platforms promote collaboration internally, between social workers, and externally, between social workers and clients. They offer built-in mechanisms to capture conversations, ask questions, chat, and otherwise communicate in a natural social context, as opposed to a form-based, system-heavy experience.

## States on the forefront of change

Given these benefits, a number of states have adopted cloud-based CRM platforms for managing their child welfare programs.

In 2018, Delaware's Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families (DSCYF) went live with the nation's first cloud-based CRM system for child welfare caseworkers, FOCUS (For Our Children's Ultimate Success). FOCUS integrates the department's four previously siloed divisions within one enterprisewide solution.

To ensure that FOCUS would spur innovations to address the core needs of DSCYF staff, the department conducted human-centered design research with key business stakeholders. The goal of the new solution was less time spent in the system, improved operational efficiency, ease of use, visibility of information across service providers, and user ability to locate information at every level of the organization.

DSCYF staff and providers can now spend more time focused on advancing their core mission, to promote the safety and well-being of the 49,000+ children and families whom they support on a daily basis.<sup>4</sup>

Other states are also migrating to CRM platforms to manage their child welfare programs.

Louisiana implemented its child protective services intake and investigation modules on a cloud-based CRM platform and saved 60 percent of its annual technology costs compared with its legacy technology solution. The solution was implemented with an external portal that designated reporters can use to provide nonemergent information on alleged child abuse or neglect. Diverting those reports to the Web has reduced call wait times on the Department of Children and Family Services' hotline.

Idaho's Department of Health and Welfare (DHW) is currently implementing Ensuring Safety and Permanency in Idaho (ESPI), a cloud-based CRM solution for child welfare. Through ESPI, the department seeks to improve child outcomes and



family engagement, meet comprehensive child welfare information system (CCWIS) compliance, and improve organizational effectiveness through data-driven decision-making. The implementation is being guided by human-centered design principles and uses an agile-based, phased implementation approach to roll out DHW child welfare functions. To date, both the cloud-based technology architecture for the entire solution, which is integrated with DHW's infrastructure, as well as the first ESPI module for intake have been rolled out in just six months.

## Looking ahead

Child welfare caseworkers deserve technology that supports, rather than impedes, the life-changing work they do on behalf of vulnerable children and their families. Cloud-based CRM solutions can bring child welfare caseworkers into the 21st century, helping them perform the right work for the right people at the right time. With this support from modern technology, caseworkers can better promote the safety and well-being of the children they serve.

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# Mindful Medicaid

Using behavioral economics to move the needle on maternal and child health



**H**AVE YOU EVER sworn off fast food, only to sneak a fry from your kid's plate when she looks the other way? Or realized you still haven't enrolled in that 401k plan even though you promised yourself you would? Sure you have. We all have.

As common as these problems are, they're pretty odd when you think about it. We tend to see ourselves as rational human beings who make decisions consistent with our own self-interests, but these are just two examples of how we make choices each day that are at odds with what we actually want for ourselves.

It turns out that economists can't always predict how even the most rational people will respond to policies or incentives. So how can policymakers design programs to drive desired behaviors?

That might be a job for *behavioral economists*. Behavioral economics goes beyond simple incentive structures and examines the complex psychological, social, and cognitive factors that impact human decision-making. Through an understanding of these factors, behavioral economists develop theories about human behavior, run real-world experiments to validate their hypotheses, and offer solutions.

The use of behavioral economics by government is fairly recent. In 2010, Britain became the first country to create a government unit dedicated to the study and application of behavioral economics. The Behavioural Insights Team (BIT), also known as the Nudge Unit, designs interventions that prompt people to pay their taxes on time or show up for scheduled medical appointments.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, the field of behavioral economics is ripe with applications for health care, and the Medicaid program in particular. Medicaid accounts for a substantial portion of state budgets and covers vulnerable populations at critical points in their lives. And though Medicaid coverage and services are available at nominal or no cost, getting eligible people to enroll in the program and use cost-effective preventive services can be a challenge.<sup>2</sup> Behavioral economics can offer a low-cost way to decrease program costs while driving better health outcomes—a true “win-win” strategy.

## Focus the microscope: Drawing from behavioral science to promote maternal and child health

Collectively, Medicaid programs across the country cover roughly half of all childbirths and 40 percent of children.<sup>3</sup> This makes the program uniquely positioned to promote maternal and child health in the United States. In our article *Mindful Medicaid*, we discuss how pregnant women enrolled in Medicaid are more likely than women with private insurance to delay prenatal care until late in their pregnancy or to skip prenatal care altogether, and how low-income children are less likely than higher-income children to receive complete vaccinations.<sup>4</sup>

To address these disparities, we explore how behavioral economics could be harnessed to move the needle on maternal and child health in Medicaid by focusing on three areas:

- 1. Messaging.** Communications that leverage positive peer pressure (or *social proof*, as behavioral economists like to call it) can be effective at getting pregnant women to quit smoking. The Louisiana Department of Health has already caught on to this concept. It has teamed up with the 2Morrow Inc. smoking

cessation app, SmartQuit, which regularly sends soon-to-be parents success stories about people who, under similar pressures, were able to quit smoking to achieve their goals. The initial results have suggested that the behavioral-based strategies of SmartQuit are more effective than alternative smoking cessation apps.<sup>5</sup>

- 2. Choice architecture.** Behavioral science reveals that people are more likely to stick with a *default*—the result you get if you do not make a choice—than they are to actively make a new, alternative choice. So why not make the default the best option? There is evidence that automatically booking people for vaccination appointments increases vaccination rates. States could auto-book children and expectant moms for vaccine appointments in order to increase vaccination take-up rates.

- 3. Program tools.** It might sound simple, but sending out text reminders and having people make formal commitments (to themselves and to others) could go a long way in improving maternal and child health. Findings from behavioral economics show that detailed, personal commitments (or *implementation intentions*) have increased the rate at which unemployment beneficiaries in the United Kingdom have returned to work.

Another study indicates that making commitments to others (or *social commitments*) were the most effective approach at getting people in Kenya—even those with the most limited financial resources—to save money.<sup>6</sup> Commitment devices and reminders are effective program tools and can be used to nudge expectant mothers to attend prenatal appointments and stay healthy during their pregnancy. They can also encourage parents to bring their babies in for well-baby visits.

## Getting started: Bringing these insights back to your state

For program directors and managed care organizations looking to apply these insights to their Medicaid population, we suggest an experimental approach before going to scale (figure 1). No two Medicaid programs are the same, so before designing an intervention, policy makers should consider taking the following steps:

- **Develop a hypothesis** about where your program may be falling short. If you believe it's the message, consider a more socially driven communication.
- **Establish evaluation measures.** Whatever initiative you settle upon, test it. Collect quality data, and rigorously evaluate its effectiveness.
- **Revise accordingly.** Did the test produce positive outcomes? If not, and the problem was with the behavioral nudge itself, think about drawing on other behavioral tools to address this problem.

While behavioral economics is still an emerging field, a rich body of evidence is beginning to develop to inform how people can be nudged to make better choices for themselves. For Medicaid programs that effectively leverage these behavioral principles, the potential payoff is better health outcomes at lower cost.

FIGURE 1

### Connecting behavioral concepts to Medicaid opportunities

Area of focus	Behavioral concept	Medicaid opportunities
<b>Messaging</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Social proof</i> to motivate behavior and inspire confidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help expectant mothers quit smoking</li> </ul>
<b>Choice architecture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Smart defaults</i> to make the path of least resistance the best choice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage Medicaid enrollment and increase vaccination rates</li> </ul>
<b>Program tools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Commitment devices</i> to articulate plans and engender positive reinforcement</li> <li>• <i>Reminders</i> embedded in technology to minimize forgetfulness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May increase likelihood of receiving prenatal care and staying healthy during pregnancy</li> <li>• May increase vaccination rates, prenatal visits, and well-baby visits</li> </ul>

Source: Deloitte analysis.

## Endnotes

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