Justice
Innovation
Lab

Case Management Principles

Version 2.01

Purpose

This document and associated documents provide a guide for leading semi-structured interview(s) for new jurisdictions to understand case management. The principles provided herein are meant as guideposts and we have provided a list of questions in a separate document to understand adherence to those principles. The list of questions is not exhaustive and not all questions need to be asked in assessing adherence to the principles of case management outlined herein. The interviewer should feel free to deviate from the questions to gain more information where necessary.

The major revision is the result of work with jurisdictions and the recognition that data entry cannot be separated from the legal processes that they reflect and support and that the result of these interviews needs to instantly produce useful output. From our experiences, the most useful output from these interviews are systems maps that link between the human interactions in the criminal legal process and the flow of information. We also realized that from our experiences, we have ‘principles’ in data collection that connect directly to case management in an office and that by explicitly defining those principles we can better identify gaps in data collection.

The end result of interviewing the jurisdiction regarding these principles should allow a jurisdiction and a partner organization to draft:

1. A systems process map - This visual diagram shows how both data moves within the case management system and the accompanying legal processes.
2. A case management gap analysis - This document compares the principles with the jurisdiction’s relevant policies and practices.
3. A data entry manual - This manual documents who at a jurisdiction is responsible for entering which data in their case management system (CMS) and the specifications for that data entry. This document allows a jurisdiction to standardize data entry practices and a partner organization (e.g. JIL) to quickly identify issues and analyze data. While possibly rarely used, such manuals are important for training new employees, can be a reference

for current employees, can help with data analysis, can be used to identify who to ask for clarification on a particular case, and **designates clear responsibility for data entry.**

4. A data expectations guide - A technical document that outlines the specific requirements for accurate data entry. These requirements can be used by
    - CMS developers to include business process protections in the CMS;
    - Data engineers interested in cleaning and restructuring the data; and
    - Analysts to understand the expected data inputs.

Directions for use

This document lays out our case management principles while our associated interview spreadsheet contains the specific questions we felt are most important to evaluating an office's alignment with these principles and identifying gaps in data collection. Ideally, a systems process map will have been created in advance of the case management principles interviews so that the interviewers have an understanding of case flow and terminology specific to a jurisdiction. The spreadsheet questions can then be modified as necessary for a given jurisdiction's processes.

In general, the associated questions should be asked in the presence of both the office IT who work on the CMS (and possibly with the data) and with office staff that generate and enter the data. This is often needed because groups may respond differently to the same question and it is important to understand both the technical mechanics of the data and the reality that the data is intended to reflect. Using this guide is an iterative process where you will need to return to sections to ask further clarifying questions as you learn more about the data entry process and the business process it is meant to reflect.

Working through these questions will require multiple interviews. Justice Innovation Lab suggests working through these questions in weekly or bi-weekly meetings of one to two hours. For every interview, the interviewer should ask to record the meeting. Where an interview concerns how data is entered into the Case Management System, the interviewer should ask that the interviewee perform the task on a shared screen to observe the actual data entry. It is a good practice to provide the interviewer's understanding of the response back to the interviewee to confirm accuracy. In the later stages of a collaboration it is good to bring examples of cases that do not appear to fit with the defined processes you have outlined from prior interviews.

Principles

1. Office has clearly defined roles and responsibilities for staff and vendors in case management.
2. Office has regularly updated documentation regarding use of the case management system to standardize data entry practices.
3. New cases are quickly identified, reviewed, and processed for legal sufficiency and diversion or alternative court eligibility, and assigned to appropriate staff.
4. Office consistently collects and records complete data regarding case intake, filing, and disposition.
5. Office resolves cases in a timely manner.
6. Office uses collected data to inform decision-making.
7. Office has data quality processes to identify and address incorrect and/or inconsistent data.
8. Office has robust data security practices.