

09. Decisions made

With the development of the designs and the prototype, decisions were made along the way that impacted the design and the data. The following provides insight into those decisions and the rationale behind them.

Data

Log In & Registration

1. We use an additional login field instead of email for two reasons. First, we do not want to connect parent communication to email. Second, a separate login field gives users more security. The backlog of requested enhancements included supporting SMS features. Using the email address as a second field for registration provides flexibility in the future to change the types of communication channels that can be supported.

2. We do not use SSN, or even 4 last digits of the SSN. Reasons - our SME and users say that Parents are not ready to share this ID. The population served may not all have SSN but this is not reason to be excluded from service. On review, there is no reason to request SSN. California's CWS system uses their own IDs sufficient to perform user authentication.

3. We ask for License Number (Foster Parent case) or Family Case Number (Biological Parent case). This ID allows us to identify person (or family). From conversations with users we know that usually mom represents the family for both biological and foster cases. Sometimes dad is also active. To avoid miscommunication problems, we use one ID number per family. Both parents will communicate using same account. This communication is not a personal but a family task. We do not implement any kind of security check around it because we have no access to the license number database. The License Number or Family Case Number also provides connections into the legacy CWS system and to a primary caseworker associated with the case.

Profile

4. Inside the parent profile, we allow users to enter additional contact information (email is already included and mandatory for registration purposes) - address to improve Facility browser experience and phone to preserve communication options outside the application.

5. We ask for information in additional fields like DOB and gender, but they are optional and are not used in current business logic. We can use them for future improvement to deliver more personalized messages.

Design

Overall

1. There is no difference inside the application based on parent type - both Inbox and Facility Map are generic.

2. We try to use 5th grade language everywhere in our messages because we expect some limitations, especially from Biological parent users. Our SME feedback indicated that many Biological parents experience literacy challenges and/or speak languages other than English at home.

3. We have only two functional areas (inbox and facility map) and one non-functional area (member profile). Thus, we placed icons for each area at the top menu, with clear separation from left to right.

Log In & Registration

4. We do not allow any kind of social network-based login - our users do not like this idea. At the same time some integration during registration is possible (import name, email, and optionally address from social networks). We add this to our backlog but with low priority due to low positive impact on parent usability.

5. Address field is not mandatory during the registration step. We ask for it the first time a user tries to browse for facilities. Users also have options to update their personal profile from this location. If a user does not want to enter an address, a default address (Sacramento, CA) will be used.

Private Inbox

6. Our communication model is the mix between social-network-style communication (chat) and traditional email communication (web mail). The major user need is for secured communication and an ability to trace and export messages. Therefore, we provide a traditional web mail-like communication experience with folders, threads, and so on. At the same time, the parent will communicate with some limited number of Caseworkers and some other representatives. We display them as Contacts, initiating a personalized communication experience. Users can also filter messages inside the current folder by contacts.

7. We use just a plain text area for the message content. A WYSIWYG rich text editor is in the backlog.

Facilities Search

8. As the facility database provided contains no detailed information regarding facility service quality, a facility's distance from home is the key factor for our users. We calculate this distance to identify the closest facilities and sort them based on distance in the result list.

9. We group facility pins on the map, in case of overlay into groups, with the number of facilities grouped. This generalized approach is used to avoid the unintelligible visualization of hundreds of icons when zooming out to large areas of California.

10. We do not limit the facilities search to facilities with matching Zip code alone. We always show all facilities near the parent's address. In fact, using a Zip code by itself does not guarantee immediate identification of the closest facility. We use a smooth model - the user can zoom in and out and scroll to see facilities near a specific place. In fact, facilities search even supports addresses without a Zip code.

11. We also allow users to search facilities in any desired area by entering an address into Search box. A parent may plan to move to a new residence, which could initiate an investigation on their part, taking them into areas outside close proximity to their original home.