AICS-HELPS

Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation
Harmonized Electronic Processing System

Introduction

The AICS-HELPS is an innovative software primarily designed to be utilized in the provision of AICS services at DSWD Field Office Caraga. This is a combination of systems and processes that would allow all partner stakeholders avail AICS services through online transaction.

Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS) serves as a social safety net or stop gap measure to support the recovery of individuals and families suffering from unexpected life event or crisis. The provision of psychosocial intervention and direct financial assistance may enable them to meet their unmet needs in the form of food, transportation, medical, educational and burial assistance.

Introduction

Over the past years of its implementation, a notable increase of individuals who experienced sudden crisis in their lives sought an assistance at the DSWD FO Caraga through AICS. In result, bulk of clients were lining up everyday just to avail the assistance. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the usual process in the availment of AICS assistance posed a threat to the health of the clients and Crisis Intervention staff. Thus, the management decided to limit the clients to be served per day so that minimum health protocols will be observed while seeking assistance in the office. Nevertheless, although the limitation of number of clients to be served per day contributed to the decreased case of COVID-19 in the office, however, this also means that there are clients in crisis situation who could not avail the AICS services immediately.

With this, online transaction in the availment of AICS services needs to be implemented to cater all the needs of the clients, service providers and CIS staff considering their health safety and convenience.

Background

The Crisis Intervention Section has developed CIS-CARES system in tracking the clients served per day. In addition, it also utilized CRIMS to monitor the clients served outside the region. The CIS-CARES is an information system developed to monitor the clients served and the services availed of the clients. However, during its implementation, the system could not contain the heaviness of the data installed that is why after few months of implementation, it caused delay in the provision of assistance because it could hardly load the needed data. Also, the system was only designed for walk-in transactions.

DSWD Experience

The AICS catered 116,480 clients from January to October 2021 despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Social workers, support staff and clients often raised their concern over face to face availment of AICS assistance considering that they may be infected with COVID-19 anytime. There are clients who are close contacts of COVID-19 positive but still processed the assistance in the office because they have no one to process the assistance on their behalf. The unending clamors of unserved clients posed a negative effect to the emotional and mental state of both the clients and the AICS staff. Service providers were often dissatisfied of the partnership because of the slow processing of reimbursement of the availed services of the clients. They experienced difficulty of tracking the reimbursement because they have no access to the internal system.

Lessons Learned

COVID-19 pandemic posed a holistic threat in the delivery of AICS services thus a holistic and new approach should be imposed to address the experienced issues and concerns. The developers have come to realize the following:

a.   Online Information System to cater the online transaction;

b.   The health of all stakeholders are of top priority;

c.   AICS should be made available to everyone who are in crisis situation without jeopardizing their health status;

With these in mind, the developers are eying for an optimized information and management system which would address the issues and concerns.
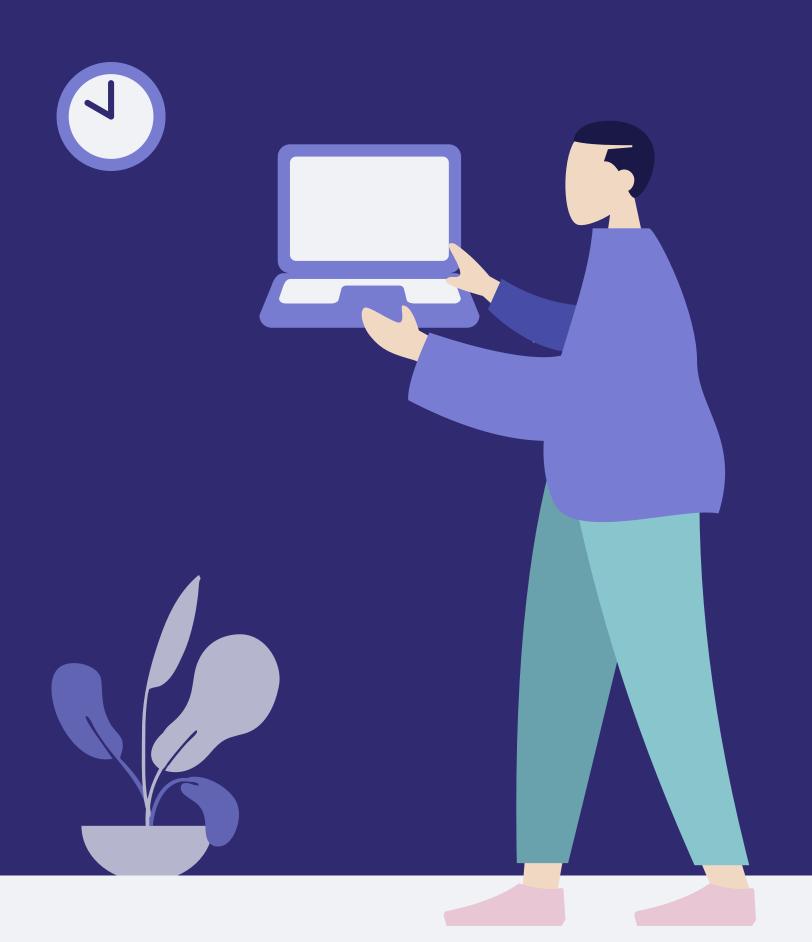
AICS-HELPS will provide the Clients the following:

- Submit the required documents
- Submit themselves in an assessment
- Digitally sign the assistance provided
- Avail AICS assistance without walking in to the Field Office

AICS-HELPS will provide the Service Providers the following:

- Submit the Statement of Account for billing
- Monitor the status of the billed amount

AICS-HELPS will provide the Verifiers the following:

- Access and assess the completeness of documents
- Assess the eligibility of the client
- Endorse the eligible clients to the social workers
- One unified system

AICS-HELPS will provide the Social Workers the following:

- Conduct assessment
- Digitally sign the GL, COE and Assessment form
- Submit the GL, COE and Assessment form

AICS-HELPS will provide the Support Staff (Billing) the following:

- Access the Statement of Account of the service providers
- Access the signed GL, COE and Assessment Form and uploaded requirements of the clients