



Backgrounder

July 19, 2012

Integrated Case Management System

- The Integrated Case Management (ICM) system was proposed to replace outdated government computer information systems used to deliver critical social programs including child protection services, child care subsidies and income assistance. The system replacement project began in 2008.
- Government's 2008 ICM Project Capital Project Plan said the system will "enable ministry staff to spend more time working directly with clients and less time on data entry, locating paper files and other administrative tasks."
- The Representative expressed concerns with the direction the ICM project was taking, and sought assurances that the system was being designed for child protection purposes directly with front line staff who collect and keep secure information pertaining to child safety.
- Implementation of the ICM system began at MCFD in April 2012 for child protection staff, who work to keep vulnerable children and youth safe.
- These users quickly encountered challenges performing their statutory functions and other daily activities. Calls and emails began to come in to RCY as ICM users became alarmed that system problems could interfere with their work to keep children and youth safe.
- Planning for ICM did not include a contingency plan if the system did not work. It is standard information systems development practice for a large IT system to have a roll-back plan, even more important when that system is relied on to inform safety decisions involving vulnerable children and youth.

Safety Considerations:

- MCFD staff reported a lack of confidence in keeping children safe for a number of reasons.
- Lack of a structured method for entering data means workers do not know where to find pertinent client information. There is no way for workers to know what information they may have missed, leaving clients at risk, particularly during a crisis when quick and accurate responses are required.

- The number of technical problems that workers identified added to the safety issues.

ICM Issues for Frontline Staff:

- **Difficulty conducting searches** – staff must search for names in the system frequently, but the ICM search function is excessively case, space and hyphen sensitive. Often a name will appear as not found in the system, when in fact the name is spelled just slightly differently (ie: MacLean vs Maclean).
- **Difficulty identifying key people involved with a client** – there is no quick and easy way to identify all the key players in an individual's life and who may be a risk to a child.
- **Duplicate records** – the potential to create duplicate records in ICM is increased because of the ineffectiveness of the search functions. There is a risk of having multiple files for a client with each file containing a specific detail of the client's history, hindering a worker's ability to find information quickly, or finding it at all.
- **Difficulty determining history and service interaction** – information is compiled in ICM in such a way that workers are not able to see the bigger picture, or get a snapshot. Key information on clients' ages, address, names, relationships, incidents or investigations is now found by searching through multiple screens.
- **Difficulty finding information** – it is easy for a worker to miss a Health and Safety alert unless he or she drills down into the records. This is a significant concern as threats of violence, possession of weapons or open drug use may all be a danger to staff meeting with clients.
- **Difficulty preparing disclosure and court documents** – printed documents for court purposes do not look professional, and judges are not accepting these documents. When a lawyer asks for disclosure, each screen must be printed in four segments as the screen does not fit on a page.
- **Other frustrations** –
 - Caseload reports that previously could be printed very quickly now take up to half an hour to print and no longer contain necessary information. The complex use of many screens to enter an incident can take most of a day, where it used to take less than half an hour.
 - Language and case flow structure of ICM does not follow established work patterns.
 - Creating a new record is cumbersome, requiring entering the name a contact information initially, then again for an incident, again for a case and again for a service.
 - Multiple printing concerns extending to court documents, caseload reports, case notes, documents in a readable font, ease of printing functions.

Case Examples:

Case Example

A two month old child came to the attention of the ministry as a result of a medical appointment at a hospital. The hospital identified multiple fractures that they felt were consistent with non-accidental injury. At the time, the child was in the care of his family but with multiple care givers, including the grandmother. After the incident, supervised access was required. Three weeks later the father confessed to causing the injuries.

When searching ICM to identify key players in this child's life and information about the child's history, there was no simple and efficient way to determine contact and detailed incident information. The following illustrates what happened when looking up information in ICM for this case:

- Two records with the child's name appeared after a Prior Contact Check was done. One file name was all in capital letters, the other included lower case. It was necessary to go into both files to determine which one contained the pertinent information.
- When determining the contacts involved with the child, two files appeared – the mother's Family Service file and the child's file.
- After entering the child's file and going to the Contacts tab, only the mother showed up as being connected with the child. The father, who was the alleged perpetrator, was not identified in the Contact List. Neither was the grandmother who was one of the caregivers for the child and the safety plan for the child.
- More information about a child's history can be found in the Incidents tab. The Incidents tab on this child's file showed only one incident even though the mother's file showed two separate intakes occurred for this child. However, if the child's file is entered from the mother's file, both incidents appear.
- Details on intakes are found in the Incidents tab. Despite the multiple Note entries, there was no information about the father being the perpetrator. It was necessary to go into each attachment to determine this.
- The mother's file showed the primary contacts linked to her include the child and the father of the child (her common-law spouse). The grandmother did not appear as a contact in the mother's file Contact List.

Result: The father, the alleged perpetrator of the abuse, is not clearly linked to the child's record. The grandmother, who is the child's safety plan and sometime primary caregiver, is also not clearly linked to the child's record. Only by searching through multiple tabs and drilling down within each tab can key information about the case be established.

Case Example

After Hours staff are ministry employees that respond to urgent calls after regular office hours. Calls can be about a range of issues – from families in crisis to youth missing from a group or foster home. Often immediate action is required.

An urgent call came into After Hours regarding a situation with a mother, father, and two children. Only the first name of the mother was provided. An address was required to send police to the family home immediately.

The individuals could not be found in ICM using a first name search only. The social worker had to go back to the former After Hours system to perform the search, identify the parents and get the address for the police.

Result: The family was at risk while social workers were frantically trying to identify the family and obtain the address. The ICM system did not meet the work requirements of the After Hours staff.

Case Example

After Hours staff must notify the daytime offices and social workers that After Hours staff have had contact with families, what actions have been taken and what the current status is for the individuals involved. These notifications are sent electronically each night, and daytime offices and workers should see them in the system the next morning.

After Hours and daytime workers have indicated that they have had problems with the notification function within ICM. Social workers are not seeing the notifications within their case list and are unaware that notifications have been sent to them. After Hours workers have said that they cannot be confident that notifications have been sent or received as there are no system messages to indicate this. In one example, social workers indicated that a number of notifications appeared on their lists in the second week of July but the comments and incidents occurred in late April – a space of two months since the urgent situation without any follow up action taken.

Result: If social workers or Delegated Aboriginal Agencies do not receive notifications, they cannot be aware that an incident has occurred with their client. They will not have the most current information about their clients to take necessary action to keep their clients safe. In addition, families that were previously unknown to the Ministry are not always receiving the follow up required after an After Hours call to ensure their ongoing safety and receive the supports they require.

Statement available at www.rcybc.ca

Media Contact: Lise Johnson, RCY Communications

Cell: 250-812-2358 Office: 250-356-9350