

Four data-driven steps to master CCWIS compliance



Introduction

Practices and policies surrounding child welfare have evolved considerably over the years. Yet the technology and infrastructure with which state and tribal agencies provide these services has fallen behind drastically. Many agencies find it difficult to provide necessary child welfare services while running on legacy systems that do not allow information to be shared with external sources. In order to deliver the quality of services they would like, organizations across the country are adopting a modern paradigm for case management, widely known as the Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS).

Designed to protect our nation's most vulnerable population, CCWIS provides a flexible, nationwide framework by which title IV-E agencies can facilitate and monitor child welfare services. By taking advantage of modern technology, CCWIS provides a practical approach for sharing data and automating processes around case management.

With a solution tailored to the specific needs of their communities, agencies can better serve the children under their jurisdictions.

In many ways, making the switch from the older Statewide or Tribal Automated Child Welfare Information System (S/TACWIS) to CCWIS presents agencies with an opportunity to reimagine the way in which they manage their constituent data. While the program remains voluntary for those agencies already using SACWIS/TACWIS, favorable cost allocation from the federal government can help to ease the financial burden for those looking to modernize their systems.

Those who have been encumbered by legacy systems should take the opportunity to implement CCWIS, making the collection of high-quality case information a top priority. If your agency is considering CCWIS, there are some things you should know about staying compliant with its data-related federal requirements.





1. Validate your address data

A fundamental principle of CCWIS is the collection of high-quality information, and that often means implementing tools and processes related to data quality. One specific area of importance when it comes to child welfare services is having correct and complete address data. When a field agent visits a house or apartment complex, for example, they need to be certain that they are visiting the correct residence—for their safety and the well-being of the child. Having accurate address information (down to the apartment number) is necessary for the success of the program.

Automating the processes around data collection can help you meet CCWIS standards for data quality. While there are real-time and batch address validation solutions available, a combination tactic should be used for the most effective approach to data quality. For instance, a real-time solution could verify address information and recommend corrections as an agent conducts a home visit, ensuring that only correct and complete information is captured. Meanwhile, a batch solution could run on the database at regular intervals to validate, correct, and standardize address data that's on file.

2. Tackle a data conversion

Transferring legacy data from older systems to new technology often means a larger modernization effort is needed. Agencies today manage a great deal of information about the children in their programs, yet the processes for managing that data tend to rely on rudimentary and inconsistent methodologies, such as using Excel spreadsheets. In order to meet the federal requirements for CCWIS, agencies will need to overhaul their existing systems and move to a target system that meets federal criteria.

Your CCWIS system will need to comply with 14 federal requirements (a reduction from the 51 fields required by S/TACWIS), and the remaining data fields and definitions within your system should be tailored to meet the needs of your agency. Before beginning a data conversion, you will want to bring together your IT department and agents to identify the requirements for your target system. These individuals should also ensure that all data fields are mapped correctly between the source and target systems and that data definitions are appropriate for their use cases. While taking on a data conversion in order to implement CCWIS can seem like a large undertaking, the end result will be a system that puts the needs of their children first.





3. Profile and monitor your data

Federal requirements for CCWIS stipulate that child welfare data must be complete, timely, and accurate. And this means that agencies will need to have visibility into the quality of their data. The problem today is that a lack of defined processes and manual tracking (for instance, using Excel spreadsheets) has created an environment in which information is siloed and inaccessible. By using a tool that performs data profiling, agencies can quickly import previously siloed datasets and inspect them for a number of criteria, including the uniqueness and completeness of the present data fields. In addition, data profiling can help to identify irregularities in certain records by automatically comparing them against others in the dataset.

If you're looking to comply with CCWIS regulation, you'll need to provide the federal government with a documented plan for data quality improvement, including a method for regularly monitoring changes in quality. Data monitoring solutions allow agencies to build dashboards and reports that visually represent the changes in quality over time. This can enable agencies to demonstrate the changes in completeness, timeliness, and accuracy of data as a result of their CCWIS program. Additionally, data monitoring tools can send alerts to agency staff when data errors do occur, allowing them to update and correct CCWIS data quickly.

4. Implement data governance

While empowering agency staff with modern technology can help you comply with federal requirements, the long-term success of CCWIS depends on your agency's ability to integrate its policies, practices, and goals into its organizational culture. After all, any staff members who create or interact with case information will need to be trained on data quality practices, be committed to upholding those standards, and feel responsible for fixing data quality issues that arise. Effecting this level of organizational change often means one thing: data governance is needed.

Governance is a set of practices and policies that ensure data management and data quality programs are carried out consistently and uniformly across the organization. In addition, governance helps to ensure that the data is accessed and shared in a safe and responsible manner, which is especially important when dealing with confidential case information. You may want to start your data governance program by ensuring that data definitions are accurate and that they are understood by all employees. In addition, you will want to appoint data stewards and a governance council to monitor the program over time and ensure policies are upheld.





Having high-quality data is the key to providing superior child welfare services. Learn how Experian Pandora can help you ease your data-related challenges around CCWIS compliance.

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