

# COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



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**“BY MAKING OUR LEGACY HISTORICAL INFORMATION READILY AVAILABLE, COGNOS HAS GIVEN US ACCESS TO THE ACCURATE AND COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION WE NEED FOR REPORTING AND ANALYSIS. WITH THIS USER-FRIENDLY PLATFORM, WE ARE NOW ABLE TO SERVE OUR CONSTITUENTS FASTER AND MORE EFFECTIVELY THAN EVER BEFORE.”**

**—GEORGINE LECHMAN, BUSINESS ANALYST, COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) has a mission to design and deliver quality services that improve the safety and independence of the people of Colorado. The agency oversees the state’s 64 county departments of social and human services, as well as the public mental health system, services for people with developmental disabilities, the juvenile corrections system, and state and veterans nursing homes.

It is the second largest agency in the Colorado state government, with a \$1.67 billion budget for state fiscal year 2005. The organization includes more than 5,000 employees and thousands of community-based service providers.

CDHS is working to transform many of its systems to provide better service delivery to the public. As part of this improvement process, the agency has implemented a Cognos reporting solution to help staff more quickly determine entitlements for returning clients.

**Industry:**

- Public Sector

**Geography:**

- United States

**Information Needs:**

- Simpler, faster report creation
- Improved data availability
- Decreased manual intervention for calculating claims

**Platform:**

- Oracle database
- HP/UX operating system

**Solution:**

- Cognos Impromptu

**Users:**

- 300+

**Benefits:**

- Access to a comprehensive view of legacy client information
- Faster, more accurate reporting times
- Reduction in claims processing timelines for returning clients
- Fewer overpayment or underpayment errors

## CHALLENGES FACED

In the spring of 2004, CDHS Information Technology Services began a data consolidation project to transfer benefit programs (financial and medical) from six existing systems onto a single platform called the Colorado Benefits Management System (CBMS). The new system would streamline client processing and eligibility calculations.

But the department had to do something about the historical client record information that wasn’t carried over from the old systems to the CBMS.

“We only converted the data that was active in general,” says Ron Huston, Chief Information Officer at CDHS. “Those clients who were not receiving benefits at that time were not converted over. However, a non-active client can come back and apply again. So, in this case, we would need to know what services had been applied in the past.”



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The challenge was to find a reporting solution that would allow service providers to retrieve the legacy client information when it was needed.

## **STRATEGY FOLLOWED**

To address the issue, IT Services created a non-operational historical database and engaged Cognos to organize and build the department's legacy client information.

"A panel of five chose Cognos based on its reputation, top-notch tools, and capability to perform the tasks," says Huston. "The system was used to consolidate the information and make it easy for the technicians to access when they needed it."

The team chose Impromptu as the reporting engine. The flexible, frame-based reporting interface allows users to easily design integrated reports to meet the specific needs of the organization.

In addition to managed reporting capability, IT Services had two specific requirements for the new Cognos solution. First, the reporting environment had to replicate the prompts and screens from the legacy system interfaces to aid user adoption.

Second, it had to provide calculation screens to help technicians determine claims as they built their reports. The resulting capability would save significant user time, since claims were being done manually with calculators and spreadsheets. Cognos met the requirement by building the program eligibility rules—such as for food stamps—right into the reporting tool.

By having a common, familiar reporting environment integrated with the legacy data, users benefit from ready access to all the historical information they need for the task at hand—with the added benefit of overpayment and underpayment calculation of benefits that save time and effort.

## **BENEFITS REALIZED**

The Cognos reporting solution is used daily by the 64 counties and sometimes by the state department, to find out about past services to an individual or family. Because the historical information is readily available, returning client entitlements can be processed much more quickly and accurately than before.

Georgine Lechman, Business Analyst at CDHS explains how the data retrieval process works. "A technician can go into the Colorado Oriented Information Network, which is our welfare system, and quickly retrieve historical information on a client from 1984 to 1989. If they are looking for entitlement, staff might need the history. Did they receive welfare before, where did they travel within the county, how many in the family, birth dates, and more." As well, counties experience fewer overpayments and underpayments since legacy data and program rules can be correlated with current information.

"Say we find out through a source, whether it's the IRS or the department of labor, that a client was overpaid in 2003," says Lechman. "The technician would go back through all the benefits and look at the eligibility criteria and what that person was issued." She adds that in cases where someone is underpaid, the Cognos system does all the calculations so technicians can use the reports to determine eligibility or argue a claim.

Cognos also provides an ad-hoc reporting capability that has proven to be extremely valuable when county commissioners or representatives call asking for information.

"Key legislators and county, state, and federal officials request critical information and want that information quickly," says Huston. "Users can go in and select the data they want and drop it into a report easily and quickly. This functionality is something they have never had before. Users used to rely on the state programmers to produce reports, and it took weeks before they received them."

With Cognos, CDHS can be confident that staff access legacy information that is accurate and comprehensive. As a result, returning clients are processed and receive their benefits sooner.

## **ABOUT COGNOS**

Cognos is the world leader in business intelligence and enterprise planning software. Our solutions for corporate performance management let organizations drive performance with planning, budgeting and consolidation, monitor it with scorecarding, and understand it with business intelligence reporting and analysis. Cognos is the only vendor to support all of these key management activities in a complete, integrated solution. Founded in 1969, Cognos now serves more than 23,000 customers in over 135 countries.



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