

Information Builders enables agile information solutions with business intelligence (BI) and integration technologies. WebFOCUS – the most widely utilized business intelligence platform – connects to any enterprise system or application and enables simple and intuitive interaction with information.

Oklahoma Department of Human Services

Snapshot

Organization

Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS).

The Challenge

Sort, summarize, and present information about thousands of children to help caseworkers provide better family services; enable agency directors to meet federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) mandates.

The Strategy

Use WebFOCUS to generate reports that reveal a wealth of information about DHS services, from initial investigations by caseworkers through foster care, adoption, subsidy, and post-adoptive subsidy services.

The Results

Helps caseworkers make better child welfare decisions; helps directors manage their programs to comply with federal program requirements.

Information Builders Solution

WebFOCUS, FOCUS, Consulting, Customer Education.



John Gelona, Oklahoma Department of Human Services.

Business Intelligence for Kids

State of Oklahoma Addresses Federal Reporting Requirements With New Child Welfare Reporting System

Government regulations often drive business-process changes for IT professionals. In the social services arena, for example, state agencies such as the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS) must be able to generate reports that verify compliance with federal regulations and program requirements. To keep track of thousands of cases and thoroughly address these federal reporting requirements, OKDHS is using Information Builders' WebFOCUS software.

"We need to deliver timely information to our field staff to ensure that we are able to meet federal outcome measures," explains Johnna Lynch, programs assistant administrator for the Oklahoma Department of Human Services. "The data must be dynamic, so case workers can look at it in different ways and filter and sort it however they choose."

“WebFOCUS was a natural fit, not only because of our FOCUS experience but because of its efficient, server-based architecture.”

WebFOCUS reports reveal a wealth of information for tracking children, from initial investigations by caseworkers through foster care, adoption, subsidy, and post-adoptive subsidy services. The reports help case workers maintain a running history on each child, including information on compliance issues, contacts, court reports, and treatment plans.

This real-time reporting infrastructure represents a big change for the agency. Up until the mid 1990s, the system used by Child Welfare staff was written in COBOL and the data was stored in a mainframe IMS database. Back then, the department had skeletal information indicating whether cases were opened or closed and a few sketchy notes, but nothing that allowed them to track cases or provide case-management services like they can do now. “We provided data to our users in a variety of ways, but primarily through fixed hard-copy reports,” says Lynch. “If we wanted to sort or filter the data in a different way, we had to ask a programmer to manually produce a special report.”

In 1995, OKDHS created and deployed the KIDS application, the first federally approved system of its kind in the nation. Today, Child Welfare staff use KIDS to keep track of thousands of child welfare cases and thoroughly address federal reporting requirements. It includes information on Child Protective Service (CPS) investigations, permanency planning cases, adoption cases, court information, client demographic information, resource information (foster homes, day care, adoption homes, group homes, etc.) and worker assignment information.

Adopting WebFOCUS

Initially, all reporting from the KIDS database was developed using FOCUS on an HP-UX platform. These legacy reports were generally run once per month and printed in hard-copy form, with no provision for dynamic filtering or sorting.

In 2003 it became apparent that OKDHS needed to enhance these reporting capabilities so they could deliver more timely and dynamic reports. OKDHS was familiar with FOCUS, which meant there was not much of a learning curve to adopting WebFOCUS. “We had much of the knowledge and expertise we needed in-house,” Lynch recalls.

OKDHS scrutinized WebFOCUS carefully before embarking on the development initiative. “We also considered business intelligence technology from Brio and Crystal Reports,” adds Lynch. “WebFOCUS was a natural fit, not only because of our FOCUS experience but because of its efficient, server-based architecture.”

First Steps

In 2003, the KIDS team began using Information Builders’ WebFOCUS to create a business intelligence reporting application. IT pros moved the KIDS database and legacy reports to a virtual Linux machine running on an IBM z90 mainframe, then used WebFOCUS to run the existing reports on the new platform.

“The reports are always accessible and the system is very easy to use. The majority of our training focuses on understanding the data and how the measures are created. WebFOCUS itself is intuitive.”

Then, led by Chief Executive Officer Farilyn Ballard, OKDHS hired Information Builders’ Consulting to develop the initial Outcome Measures Reports. The purpose was to provide caseworkers with accurate information about children within the system while also supplying compliance information for federally mandated regulations. They began with three key reports: Time to Reunification Exit, Time to Adoption Exit, and Children Not Reentering Out-of-Home Care.

DHS staff defined the requirements and built the data sources for these reports. To create the reporting database, OKDHS extracted Child Protective Services (CPS) and permanency planning data from the KIDS database and stored it in FOCUS data marts. Once the data was in place, Information Builders’ Consulting created the report prototypes. OKDHS staff took the prototypes, refined and then deployed them. “Our programmers were able to take the prototypes and quickly become familiar with building WebFOCUS applications,” Lynch says.

OKDHS engaged Information Builders’ Customer Education services to conduct on-site training classes for OKDHS developers. “The training was very helpful and we’ve had quite a bit of technical support with the installation of the software,” continues Lynch. “Working with the on-site training staff and consultants, we gained a lot of knowledge about the report development process. We have been very happy with Information Builders and the services they provided.”

Learning From Experience

Information Builders’ Consulting went on to create seven additional reports, which reveal how the department is performing with respect to six key federal outcome measures and other CSFR measures. “We update the majority of files weekly, and they are stored on our WebFOCUS Reporting Server to make the response time extremely quick,” says Lynch. “Some reports are updated daily.”

To simplify access to all this information, OKDHS decided to use the WebFOCUS business intelligence dashboard. The dashboard gives users a central location to find and run the reports, allows them to review multiple reports at a single glance, and enables the real-time deployment of new reports.

Currently, there are more than 2,000 KIDS users, from directors and supervisors to contractors, caseworkers, and administrative support staff. “We have received extremely positive responses concerning the flexibility of the reports and the ease of accessing information from our Web pages,” says Lynch. “Our mainframe application had a Windows-like front-end, but it wasn’t very user-friendly. We could save reports, export the information into ASCII format, and then import it into Excel, but most users didn’t have the skills or inclination to do that.”

With the WebFOCUS application, these same ends can be achieved simply by accessing the Web site, picking a report, and saving the results to Excel. “The reports are always accessible and the system is very easy to use,” says Lynch. “The majority of our training focuses on understanding the data and how the measures are created. WebFOCUS itself is intuitive.”

Find Out More

To find out how our solutions can help your company succeed, talk to an Information Builders representative today.

Contact your local Information Builders office, visit us at

informationbuilders.com,

or in the U.S. and Canada,

call **(800) 969-4636.**

Measuring Success

If the overriding objective of the KIDS application is to meet federal guidelines and maximize reporting flexibility for caseworkers, then WebFOCUS has been a resounding success. Starting at the state level, users can drill down from area to county to supervisor to worker, jumping directly to detailed reports about particular cases. They can also examine trends over a 12-month period. "Our supervisors and directors can determine where they've done well and where they've done poorly at any level or within any area, from the summary levels down to the client detail," says Lynch.

Reports generated by WebFOCUS not only help caseworkers provide better family services, but also help agency directors meet federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) mandates. "We are required to provide quarterly updates to a program improvement plan to the federal government," explains Bill Hindman, programs administrator for Children and Family Services. "There are about 100 measures that are considered when determining compliance with CFSR program requirements."

OKDHS has experienced measurable improvements in its services as a result of the KIDS system. One of the primary motivators was the need to deliver timely information to the field staff. Before they started using WebFOCUS, field staff did not know how they performed on meeting federal guidelines until one to two years after a given reporting period. Now, with all the relevant data residing on the WebFOCUS Reporting Server, it is instantaneously available to authorized WebFOCUS users.

"Having current data that is readily available helps caseworkers keep track of the children and make better decisions," concludes Ballard. "As an organization, we can immediately gauge performance at the supervisory and worker levels. The availability and accessibility of the data is impacting practices in a positive way. As our services to families improve, our outcomes improve in tandem."