

## **Item II    Discuss Trial Court Performance and Accountability Administrative Order**

### **Issue 4:    Revision to the Case Management Framework (Florida Supreme Court Standards for Electronic Access to the Courts )**

#### **8.0. CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM DESIGN FRAMEWORK**

##### **Overview**

In pursuit of the mission and vision of the Florida Judicial Branch, the courts are committed to an effective, responsive and accountable judicial system. While understanding that the quality of justice cannot be measured solely by statistics and reports, the court believes that case information is critical to its efficient management of judicial cases and it should form one cornerstone of sound court management. To that end, the Florida court system must establish a uniform, integrated, statewide case management system that will provide reliable and accurate case data for use at all levels of the state court system.

A case management system can broadly be considered the set of functional standards and requirements and the resultant collection of programs, utilities, and protocols that collectively provide for initiation, processing, tracking, management and reporting of cases through the judicial system. In addition to enabling the efficient flow of day to day operations, an effective case management system must provide for comprehensive and uniform reporting of case level and court activity data as required for overall court management. This critical collection and reporting component ensures fundamental accountability for efficient and effective management of court activity at all levels of the courts. Consequently, a case management system should be designed to track case event data but also court case process.

The challenge that faces the court system is to define a framework that promotes meaningful development of an integrated, uniform system without hampering that development by dictating any particular implementation. Thus, the generally stated principles provided herein must be consciously and specifically applied to each component of the system as it is developed. This case management system framework contains sufficient detail to provide immediate guidance to clerks of court and other stakeholders with respect to their duties and responsibilities to the court while remaining general enough to provide for the incremental development required for this complex project. The framework builds upon existing case management work and strives to present a consistent method for system development. It presents a standard definition for a case management system and outlines the guiding design principles to be applied at all levels. Applying these principles will ensure a viable case management system that encapsulates flexibility, modularity, consistency, quality, reporting and accountability, and accessibility. This case management system is expected to incorporate case maintenance as well as case management functionality.

## **Appellate Case Management**

Although the legislature did not specifically direct the clerks of the appellate courts to commence electronic filing by October 1, 2009, providing the appellate courts with electronic courts capability is equally important. The appellate courts and the Supreme Court cannot accept electronic records from appeals from the trial courts if they do not have the capacity to receive and store documents electronically. In any appellate electronic filing and case management system, additional functionality must be included. Particularly, collaboration elements are essential to any appellate court system, as all decisions require review by at least three judges in the appellate courts and more in the Supreme Court. The appellate courts have already attempted to design a system but funding issues prevented further development. They are currently exploring other systems. Additional funding will be necessary to make the appellate courts and the Supreme Court electronic, but the investment will save operational costs just as it will in the trial courts.

## **Design Principles**

The case management system design shall be based upon the work of the Florida Courts Technology Commission as codified in Supreme Court Administrative Order AOSC03-16, IN RE: Adoption of Functional Requirement, Technical Standards and Strategic Plan. Clerks of court and court administration should submit design and implementation plans to the Florida Courts Technology Commission for review and approval before software or hardware is purchased or system development begins.

Key concepts in the design of this uniform case management system are flexibility, modularity, consistency, quality, reporting and accessibility. An integrated system should incorporate existing case management system as is practicable to take advantage of current investments and to provide for the controlled phase out of obsolete systems. The complexity of a statewide, uniform system dictates that it be developed as an interoperable suite of independent, modular components, such as e-filing or civil case management, that, when fitted together, build the integrated uniform case management system. This layered design will allow the court to take advantage of existing data systems while providing the flexibility needed for future development. Interoperability and independence require that each component include the intrinsic capability to share data and other common resources in a consistent manner across all components of the system.

Because of the modular design format which makes future interoperability requirements uncertain, insofar as is possible and practicable, each component should provide the capability for data sharing via multiple mechanisms such as through single system data sharing, replication, extraction, transformation and loading (ETL) or query-response. At a minimum, each component should provide active ETL capability for the export system data, as individual records and in bulk, into a common format (such as XML) and transfer that data to another component of the system using basic transfer technologies such as sftp and SOAP. The Court's Integration and Interoperability Document defines standard mechanisms in more detail. Active, in this context, means that should a program component need to transfer data to another

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component via a particular available mechanism, then that capability can be enabled without significant code modifications.

Such interoperability is a challenge, given that the case management needs of the various divisions of court and of court programs differ significantly. However, every effort should be made to define a common API and “look and feel” upon which the case processing components for each division of court and court program can be based. To ensure that users obtain the most benefit from this system as quickly as possible, design managers must ensure that each component provides significant, if not full, functionality without critical dependence on other, as yet undeveloped, components.

The Florida Courts Technology Commission has defined the following court functions to be included in any case management system. The court has designated all of these functions to be a priority for automation. Note that examples are provided for illustration only and are not all inclusive. Refer to the *Trial Court Functions Detail List* for a more complete list.

- Case Intake
  - includes case initiation and indexing, docketing and related record keeping etc.
- Case Management/Tracking
  - includes ticklers, user alerts & automated workflow and forms generation, case closure, audit trail management, statistical reports, management reports, electronic designation of appellate records etc.
- Case Scheduling
  - includes docketing, schedule and case management, calendaring
- Resource Management
  - includes monitoring/analyzing use and cost of resources, tracking/processing guardianship examiners and other expert witnesses, summoning jurors etc.
- Court Proceedings
  - includes pre-hearing preparation, case information access and review, hearings, disposition etc.
- Document Management
  - includes document processing, file archival and destruction, document management, exhibit management, electronic designation of appellate records etc.
- Budget & Financial Management
  - includes accounting, processing fee waivers, bond processing, statistical and management reports etc.
- Personnel Management
  - includes time and event tracking, statistical and management reports etc.
- Research & Data Management

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- includes data collection/transmission, data quality control, statistical and management reports
- Technology Management
  - includes application development, systems maintenance and troubleshooting etc.,
- General Administration, Management & Oversight
  - includes program oversight and security planning etc.

However, it is recognized that certain components, while independent, do not provide full value as a standalone application. Development of these components will typically require the concurrent development of other modules in order to maximize the value provided to the courts. While these general functions include many areas of court operations not specific to case management, any case management system must incorporate elements from each of these functions. It is expected that any integrated, unified case management system will also interoperate with other non-case specific systems in these functional areas. As public information is considered an integral aspect of the courts mission and vision, public information elements should be defined as a fundamental capacity of each component during development.

When developing any module of a case management system, the recommended implementation priority should be as follows. Functions given the same priority should be implemented concurrently to ensure inherent dependencies are addressed and operational relationships are maximized.

1. Case Management/Tracking, Case Intake, Document Management, and Case Scheduling
2. Court Proceedings and Budget & Financial Management
3. Resource Management and Research & Data Management
4. Personnel Management
5. Technology Management
6. General Administration, Management, & Oversight

The technical standards and plan described in Administrative Order AOSC03-16 is a solid starting point for the development work ahead. However, like all systems which serve the public, court processes and court needs evolve over time in response to changes in statutes, other law, court rules and best practices. As each component of the overall case management system is developed, systems design managers should review the above standards for applicability and update requirements and standards as necessary. Also, as the functional requirements and technical standards encapsulated in AOSC03-16 were developed in 2003, the system design managers should, as a first planning step, conduct a complete review and update of the cross functional requirements to ensure that they have a comprehensive, up-to-date picture of common elements upon which to base a uniform system design.

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Actual implementation of the uniform case management system components may require additions or deletions to these specifications to ensure that the final system is relevant to the case and data management issues facing court managers today and in the future. However, frequent changes, even those that are considered necessary, can negatively impact systems development and usability leading to inefficient or ineffective systems. The development plan for each component should provide for periodic expansion cycles to ensure that the case management system remains responsive to evolving court needs and to changes in statutes or rules of court.

One purpose of any case management system is to facilitate the administration of case activity within the courts and to provide court managers with the supporting information that is necessary to effectively manage that activity. Consequently, it is critical that the system remain relevant to its users at all levels of court. This is achieved by recognizing the information needs of the users and by facilitating the addition of new elements as required through a well defined and responsive expansion process. Data that is collected should be available in a timeframe that best fits the needs of the users. The system should provide the capability for case management and court administration users to easily extract data or perform non-standard query actions as required by emerging needs. This ad-hoc capability should be provided using common query tools such as SQL rather than through a custom tool that is specific to one component or module.

As an integral aspect of general design, system development should incorporate quality elements such as specific input data validations and mechanisms for monitoring and correcting data that fail validation as close to the input level as possible. Data should be checked for inadmissible data combinations, incompatible data, and missing data. The system should provide for the straightforward correction of data at the level closest to origination which includes the point of document submission. This will increase the likelihood that data will be accurate and reliable and reduce the amount of effort that must be expended to ensure that accuracy. Additionally, the case management system should provide for macro level quality evaluation including audit trails, automated checks and reasonableness reviews by subject matter experts. System design should ensure that conducting these evaluations on a regular basis is a simple and straightforward process.

All case management system components should be designed to easily allow for two-way sharing of data with other internal system components and with external sources at the state or national level. Wherever possible, the case management system should implement statewide and national standard concepts, code and classifications and a common methodology for data representation and transfer. This would allow data from multiple sources both within and without the court system to interoperate seamlessly within the context of case management and reporting.

### **Current Data Collection Systems**

Existing data collection systems provide critical management data to the courts at all levels. The modular nature of the development process for a case management system requires the careful consideration of existing reporting requirements to ensure that completion of one component of the system does not inadvertently reduce the quality or quantity of data currently collected. The

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court has several critical data collection and reporting mechanisms currently in place, such as are detailed in Florida Rules of Judicial Administration 2.240, 2.245 and 2.250 and §25.075, Florida Statutes and other relevant rules and statutes. These reporting mechanisms cannot and should not be abandoned prematurely. Although every effort will be made to consolidate data collection and reporting mechanisms during the development process, clerks of court, circuit court administration and other reporting entities should expect to continue data collection and reporting under the appropriate guidelines until directed otherwise by the courts.

**Security and Confidentiality**

All case management components should employ the utmost care in ensuring the confidentiality of case records as appropriate and at all levels of case and data processing. Redaction software should be deployed as appropriate to ensure that confidentiality is protected on display or archive. Appropriate security and encryption measures should be built into the system so that the transfer and storage of data within the system does not expose sensitive data to unauthorized access. Statutory requirements for retention, availability, display and purging of cases that are sealed or expunged or otherwise restricted should be strictly and programmatically enforced. System design should provide for the secure deletion of case records as necessary across separate system components.

**Other Standards**

As individual case management components are developed, similar work at the national level should be considered. For example, the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) has identified the general movement of a case through the judicial system as presented in their “Introduction to Function Standards, Draft February 2, 2001.” The NCSC has also provided a series of general Case Management Standards which may serve as a resource in the development process. However, no uniformly accepted national standards exist. Consequently, systems design methodology managers should review the standards articulated by the National Center for State Courts in their Case Management Standards ([http://www.ncsconline.org/d\\_tech/standards/default.asp](http://www.ncsconline.org/d_tech/standards/default.asp)) for applicability to individual case management components and incorporate those standards which are determined to be relevant to an efficient and effective Florida case management system.